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RED PANTS
AND OTHER STORIES



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RED PANTS AND OTHER STORIES

BY

CAPTAIN JOHN W. THOMASON, JR.

U. S. MARINE CORPS

Author of "Fix Bayonets!"



CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

NEW YORK ✓ LONDON

1927

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RED PANTS



I

RED PANTS

THE flank company of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, came, at length and after various adventures, to rest in the Vierzy Ravine. A few kilometres forward the battle of Soissons roared into the afternoon of its second day, the 19th of July, 1918. The flank company, now something under a hundred men, was very tired and extremely cross, and hungry beyond anything in its wide experience.

"Th' lootenant passed the word we'd wait here till the galley's get up—"

"Yeh—seen a battalion-runner; he said they was somewhere around, but lost as usual. An' here we sit—"

"Somethin' to be said for trenches—you don't have to go so many places—my dogs is wore off clean to my knees. Open warfare—"

"Some of you animals are sure hard to please," said Sergeant Cannon sadly. "Down in those swell Verdun trenches, you guys was all moanin' because you couldn't get Heine in the open, like—now you've got him in the open, an' you growl just the same."

The mission of the flank company in the attack that started the morning before had been combat liaison—

that is, to keep contact between the flank of the 2d American Division—Regular Army and United States Marines—and the 1st Moroccan Division of Mangin's X^e French Army on their left. The detail had not been exacting, except that it had involved a lot of distance. The Senegalese and North Africans of the Moroccan Division operated to the entire approval of the critical 5th Marines. Together, on the track of a hurricane of artillery that shook the world and made the dim Villers Cotterets forest a hell of flashing fires and smoky thunder, they had poured over the Boche forward positions, long French bayonets and broad American bayonets flickering together in the red light of the shells.

Drawn a little apart some places, and all furiously mingled elsewhere, they had shot and stabbed across the echeloned machine guns and the wire and the rifles that held the woods. Bursting through into open wheat and sunlight, they suffered alike from the cross-fire that came out of the Vierzy Ravine, and they had followed, Senegalese calling on Allah and Marines swearing and yelling, the tanks that opened the way into that place. They had swept on to the final objective beyond Vierzy, and established their lines, and come out when their job was accomplished. Now they lay on the fringes of the fight, still in contact, sodden with weariness, waiting for what the gods might send.

Up forward, the war went on, with a great orchestration of sound; monotone of machine guns, hysterical

They had poured over the Boche forward positions, long French bayonets flickering together in the red light of the shells.





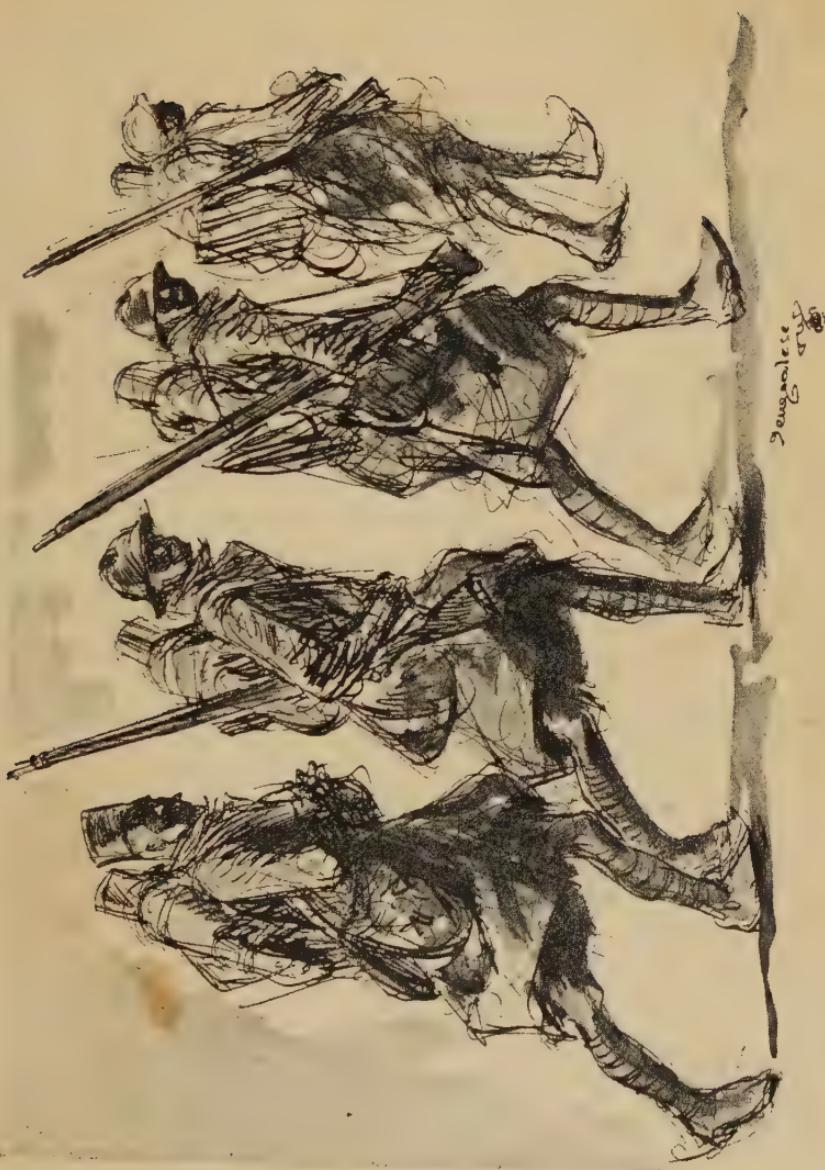
crackle of rifles, drumming of field-batteries, and the roar and rumble of heavy shells. Other troops of the 2d Division, French Colonial^s of Mangin's assault army, and the 1st American Division, all battered into the collapsing face of the Marne Salient. From Soissons south the fighting was bitter; Boche reserves were flowing in from the Rheims country, and a desperate German general held up his crumbling flank with one hand, while with the other he plucked troops and guns, now threatened with disaster, from Château-Thierry and the Marne valley to the south and west.

But the troops resting around the Vierzy Ravine were not concerned with these things. This ravine had been, for some hours on the 18th of July, an interesting place. There were Boche support troops in it, and broken units from the woods had reformed there and fought. It angled from the wheat in front of the woods across to the right, toward the town. The dead were very thick as you approached it; they lay together in German *feld-grau*, American khaki, and the mustard-colored uniforms of the Moroccan Division. Within, in the ravine, the shells had wrought terribly; there was wreckage of horse-batteries and motor transportation caught on the move, and pitiful wreckage of men, flung grotesquely here and yonder. Then tanks and rifles and bayonets had come into it; the old Boche died very hard in the Vierzy Ravine. Later, wounded men had crawled or been carried to its shelter. There had been a German dressing-station under a cliff

where a cave was, and a red-headed surgeon of the 9th Infantry had taken it over complete, with German doctors, and tended acres of casualties for thirty hours or so.

The afternoon of the 18th, Boche planes had bombed it furiously, and Boche heavies plastered it from end to end with 220-millimetre shells. Then the battle rolled on, and the Boche became too gravely concerned about his immediate front to give attention to the approaches. Now the Vierzy Ravine was a sort of backwash of the war, into which drew a melancholy drift of wounded men, gassed men, prisoners, and exhausted troops who had gone to the far edge of human endurance.

The flank company of the 5th settled into holes and regarded things morosely. They had come a long way, very arduously. They had fought a battle, and done odd jobs, bringing in wounded and digging and so forth after that, and they had not eaten. They had last seen their galleys and had a formal meal the forenoon of July 16; the messmen had slammed out beans, packed up and departed by another road—at least, no man saw them. Since then, the company, its iron rations expended, had cadged off French outfits and searched the knapsacks of Boche casualties. These yielded an infrequent sausage and occasional little wooden cylinders of honey, and much black *Kriegsbrot*—sustained life but nothing else. The lieutenant commanding the company was hungrier than anybody; he rubbed his lean stomach



“Them Senegalese is *bon* fighters!”

and listened to his men curse the war and utter biting comments on things in general.

Some of them slept. An unshaven marine with a dirty



Searched the knapsacks of Boche casualties.

face and a bright dent in his helmet scratched himself thoughtfully and said:

“Damn all mess-sergeants! Them Senegalese coons over there, they’ve et twicet to-day. Smelt it, over all these stiffs——”

RED PANTS

“Yeh. These Frogs won’t fight wit’out chow. I was over there. Its a kinda mutton stew. I scoffed some before they run me off.”

“Frogs been in the war longer’n we have. We’ll get that way—such as last it out. Say—them Senegalese is *bon* fighters! Never thought a nigger’d fight—but did you see ‘em in the woods?”

“Boy, howdy! The way they walked into the ole Boche with they knives! An’ I saw one cuttin’ the ears off a Heine he got with his bay’net——”

“Rather fight any troops I ever saw than them niggers—got to kill ‘em to stop ‘em.”

“Well, they ain’t like any niggers I ever saw. They’s built like a destroyer—long an’ sharp—rangy^{as} cusses. Haven’t got flat noses an’ gourd-heads like a cawn-fiel’ nigger down South.”

“Th’ lootenant says they ain’t niggers, exactly. Says they got a lot of Bedou-win or somethin’ in ‘em. They all these here Mohammedans. B’lieve in Allah. B’lieve if they get killed they go straight to Heaven—hear ‘em yellin’ ‘Allah’ in that strong point just inside the woods—you know—past where little Tritt got his?”

“Don’t know what they was yellin’, but it sounded dangerous, I’ll tell the cockeyed world! Man, they’re nasty fighters—tell you what I saw——”

“Yeh, they fit,” said Sergeant Robert Slover, whose sleeve now interested abundant flies where he had wiped his bayonet on it. “We all fit. But when in hell do we eat?”

RED PANTS

There was a commotion down the ravine, from the direction of Vierzy. Somebody caught a magic word.

“Lootenant, sir, that looks like our galleys yonder——”

It was. They came, ration-carts and rolling kitchens, the mules lathered, the men hot and panting. The company mess-sergeant, an old-time marine of Polish extraction, with a three days' beard and the harassed air mess-sergeants always have, clumped up and saluted.

“Report for orders, sir. Bad time gettin' here. Since we left Croutte, sir, we——”

“All right! All right! Why in hell haven't you got a fire in that buzzicot? You can have a fire, movin'. Don't you know when these men ate last?”

“Sir, we got bum sailin' orders an' stood into that town yonder. They wuz shellin' the road, but we didn't lose no mules—only couple messmen. Then they sent us out here, an' they was still shellin' the road, an' we come right along, makin' knots, an' the fires kinder jolted out. But I can light off one right away——”

“Don't stand here wind-jammin'—always were a sea-lawyer. Rustle some chow. What you got?”

“Well, sir, we got some rice, mostly, an' some coffee, an' there's a few cans of corn bill but not enough to issue. I reckon I can cook a sort of slum, sir. Only, about them two messmen what's casualties—can I get two——”

“You traded that corn bill for cognac somewhere, an' then drank all the cognac—I know you!” said the lieutenant bitterly. “Tell Sergeant Cannon I said to give you a man—now get under way.”

The mess-sergeant bustled off. "Lieutenant's got a hell of a grouch. Better get some coffee into him."

The galley—with a pair of new shrapnel holes in the pipe, proudly displayed by the cook—smoked up. The men got out mess-kits and waited, resigned and patient like all good soldiers who trust in God and the quartermaster.

"Ain't it jus' like a damn Q. M. to send up rice when you need quick chow?"

The lieutenant reclined against a rock and tried to doze. When you connected up with your rations again, things weren't so bad. Thinking it over, it had been a *bon* fight, though not so good to-day, judging from the 6th Regiment casualties coming back—a lot of them. You never knew much about a fight until afterward; this one should be worth studying. . . . "Looked like a perfect surprise, from where we sat. And I'm glad to have seen that Senegalese outfit in action. Very worthy men. Never saw many niggers down home that would fight—but this outfit—they're different. . . ."

There was a racket, and the mess-sergeant came, so mad that he couldn't swear. He propelled before him a tall, sullen soldier in the uniform of the Moroccan Division, a hard-looking darky with an outthrust lip and rolling, angry eyes. In each paw the fellow clutched a tin of corned beef, and his musette bag bulged on his hip. The mess-sergeant had him by the collar and the arm, and several of the galley force attended, with weapons in their hands.

The mess-sergeant halted his captive violently, and spoke:

“Sorry to disturb the lootenant, but——”



“Sorry to disturb the lootenant, but——”

“Oh, hell—can’t a man shut his eyes? All right, what is it now?” The lieutenant sat up. “What the devil you doin’ with that Senegalese? You know damn well orders are to have no foolishness with these Frogs.”

“Sir, we’re gettin’ a sort of slum ready, like the lootenant ordered, for the comp’ny, which the comp’ny

hasn't had no chow they tell me since two days before yestidy, which we're gettin' it ready as fast as we can, what with that new guy Sergeant Cannon give me in place of two messmen we got bumped off on the road, and——”

“Yes, yes—I know all that. I want to know, what are you doin' with that Senegalese?”

The mess-sergeant loved to present a report decently and in order, with all the facts duly marshalled; but he knew when to humor an officer. He drew a long breath and started over, with less gusto.

“Yes, sir. It was like this, sir. I just found this nigger in my ration-cart. He's walkin' off with our corn bill which we haven't got more'n enough to go with this slum we're cookin' up. Had his musette bag full an' a can in each hand—look at it, sir. I started to kill him, but rememberin' your order, sir, not to have no foolishness with these here Frog outfits, I brought him up to the lootenant. We can just take him off and shoot him, quiet-like, if the lootenant wants.” The mess-sergeant cast his eyes around, looking for a seemly place.

“Stealin' my corn bill, was he? Godamighty!” The lieutenant breathed through his nose and searched his soul for adequate expressions. He knew a little French, but that language wasn't violent enough. He launched into the idiom of his native South. “Why, you damn' ornery black son of a——”

The angry face under the French helmet relaxed,

lighted up, and split in a white-toothed grin. "Why, boss—Lawd Gawd, sah, is you from the Souf?"

The lieutenant stopped midway in a searing passage. It was a long time since he had heard the gentle, drawling darky speech of the land where he was born. He said mildly: "Of course I'm from the South. What's it to you, damn your eyes?"

"Why, bless Gawd, sah—Ah'm from Galveston, Texas, my ownself—yessah, Galveston, Texas!"

It is a far cry from that white city that drowses by the Gulf to Soissons fight, but service in the Marines had cured the lieutenant of being surprised at anything.

"Let this man go, mess-sergeant; I think he's a friend of mine. All right—you heard me. Boy—just give that corn bill back to the mess-sergeant; you know a man don't steal chickens close to home. Now, what are you doin' in that uniform? I know Galveston mighty well. Sort of raised there."

Profoundly stricken, the mess-sergeant unhanded his man. If he hadn't seen it, he wouldn't have believed it. He retired with his corn bill and his messmen, growling: "Must be the lootenant's light-headed from not havin' his ration in so long. Or maybe its this here shell-shock. Damn' if I ever saw. . . ."

The big negro pulled his blouse back into shape and shook himself. You observed that he had a high, soldierly look.

"Sho' is a rough-talkin' w'ite man! Cap'n, sah, is

dat a Bull Dur'm cigarette? Thankee, sah." He rolled one, had out a *briquet*, and inhaled luxuriously. "Cap'n, sah, if Ah'd knowed you was home folks, Ah never would have gone round dat ole wagon—nossah! Thought dey was jus' w'ite trash, like. How'd Ah git heah? You never heared tell such a thing in all yo' bawn days—Ah never did, either—but heah Ah is—sho'!"

"You 'member, sah, some yeahs back, it's a right hahd yeah on us stevedoh boys at Galveston? Sho' was; ships quit comin', they warn't no cotton movin', us dam-neah stahved.

"Atter w'ile, we heahs they's a wah on; dey was some talk of it in Galveston; but us stevedohs we jus' figgered it was w'ite folks' doin's, and we never paid no 'tention, special. But things git powerful tight on de waterfront. Ah don't eat reg'lar a-tall! Den one o' dese cattle-boats come in, what handles mules. De mules stahts comin', an' befo' Gawd, Ah never knew dere was so many mules in de worl'! We loads 'em on de cattle-boat, an' de cap'n say he want some boys what ain't skeered of mules to take cyah of de mules on de boat."

Yes—one remembered. In Texas that year the cotton crop rotted on the stalk because it was cheaper to let it rot than to pick and gin it. And presently came officers of the French and British services, buying horses and mules. . . .

"De pay was good, an' Ah kinder has a itchin' foot anyway, an' like Ah say, Ah ain't been eatin' reg'lar. So Ah goes along.

"We sails, an' Ah gets me a misery in mah belly an' can't eat no grub, but Ah gets over it. Finely, we gets to a place dey call *Mair-say*—dat's it—*Mair-say*. Its a bigger town dan Galveston, but de folks is funny folks. All



Ships quit comin', they warn't no cotton movin', us dam-neah stahved."

de mules gits off de ship, an' de cap'n he take me ashore to ca'hy he bag for 'im. W'en he git to de ho-tel, he tell me to go on back to de ship or de paterollers git me. Sho' nuff, dey's a slew o' sogers aroun'. Well, Ah stahts, but Ah been powerful dry on dat ship, an' I stops to git me a little dram—some of dis coon-yac. Cap'n, is you ever tried dat coon-yac? It sho is noble booze! Den Ah

gits me some mo' coon-yac, an' Ah don' feel so lonesome. Ah steps aroun' to see de town.

"Ah sees a colored man, like me, standin' on de corneh. He's got on de nobles' clo'es you seed in your life. Dressed up jus' like a lodge membah. He's got on a little red hat without no brim, an' a little blue jacket, an' a red sash, and gre't big red pants, all baggy-like. Ah ask him what he b'long to. Ah says to mahself, if Ah can git a suit like dat, sho will knock dem Galveston niggers dead! Well, he don' say nothin'. Fust-off, Ah thinks he jus' uppity, because of he pants maybe, but de fac' was, he was jus' plain ignerunt. He's one of dese French niggers, frum Africa, an' he ain't never learn to talk mah talk.

"Then Ah say somethin' 'bout coon-yac, 'cause Ah'm stickin' wid them pants, an' he know coon-yac all right. We go in a s'loon, an' we has some. They's a man in there what ask me what Ah want. Ah tell him Ah like them pants. He laff fit to kill, an' he say he fix it up. Well, we drinks right smaht coon-yac, an' some time that night we go out to de casern, where dis French nigger live at. It 'pear like he in de ahmy. An' dats what happen to me. Dey jus'—to make a long story short, like my ole Gran'mammy Caledonia uster say—dey done take me by de nap of de neck an' de seat of de britches an' fling me in dis damn wah! An' heah Ah is."

The lieutenant considered; negroes interested him. There had been negroes around him all his life. This boy was a rare type; reminded you of old Mingo, on his fa-



"He's got on de nobles' clo'es you seed in your life. Dressed up
jus' like a lodge membah."

ther's place in the far South; reminded you of the tall savage who, they told, had been the body-servant of that old lion, Sam Houston. Fellow had a certain dignity; good features. "Anything can happen—specially in a war—and it frequently does! Struck one of those French colonial devils with a sense of humor—yeh." They talked of Galveston, of Church Street, and the Strand, and Tremont. "He's a Galveston darky, all right."

"Say, where'd you get that?"

The negro had the inevitable *Croix de Guerre*; the crimson *fourragère* of the *Légion d'Honneur* was part of the uniform of that fine Moroccan Division, famous from Tonquin to the Yser. But in the French service one must do something very exceptional and amazing to wear the green-and-yellow ribbon of the *Médaille Militaire*. Only generals commanding armies, and enlisted men, can win it; and only for conspicuous service to the republic.

"Dey gives me dat in de horspittal, after a fight we had at dat place, Verdun. We was down souf somewhere for de winter-time, wukkin' on de roads. Dey h'ists us out in de middle of de night, an' we goes in camions two-three days to Verdun, where it 'pears like ole Boche is breakin' thoo de w'ite sogers. Dey's a ole foht name Douamont; we has de hell of a rukkus in dere! Cap'n, dat was hell to pay an' no pitch hot! Snow on de groun'. Powerful col'—Ah mos' froze. Ah kills a Boche wid mah bay'net—an' it breaks. Trouble wid dese French bay'-nets, dey always breaks, 'less'n you juk 'em out right.

Mine breaks, an' de nex' Boche, Ah snatches de th'oat right outer him. Den Ah fin's me a knife, an' I jus' natcherly raises hell. Ah was right mad. Ah got hu't bad mah ownself an' dey gives me dis in de horspital."

One remembers communiqués, read in languid West Indian stations. They were rushed up over that road the French call the *Via Sacra*, reserves from anywhere, while seven divisions of old French Territorials fought forty divisions of German storm-troops for the Verdun gate. . . . Those seven divisions, they do not exist now; their flags are hung in the Pantheon, with the old great relics of the Land of the Lilies. The 3d Guards, whom the proud Brandenburgers called the Cockchafers, took Douamont; Mangin's Colonials, attacking terribly through the February snows, threw them out. . . . Yes—man gets an arm and a shoulder on him, handling cotton-bales on a Galves-on wharf. . . .

"Cap'n, Ah tell you a funny thing. It come to me, heah in dis wah, dat Ah ain't skeered of anything any mo'. Never was a skeery nigger like some, but now dere ain't nothin'— My ole gran'mammy Caledonia, she was kinder quality folks. She come outer de old States wid de fambly of Generul Kittrelle—you know, de ole general dat whip all de Yankees in de wah. Befo' dat, she come from Africa her ownself. She allus told us when we was little dat we was quality niggers, an' she 'lowed her folks was kings, like, in Africa. She uster say she never

knowed nobody else aroun' dere whut had kings in dey fambly. We never associate wid trash niggers, what she call 'em. She was proud of bein' black, an' she raise us dat way."

"H'm. What you going to do when you get back to Galveston? Seems to me——"

The man wrestled some with a thought. Then: "Cap'n, sah, you knows how it is in de Souf. Sometimes Ah gets such a honin' for Galveston, Ah could mos' die. Right now, Ah wish Ah had a mess o' greens, wid side-meat an' cawn-pone, an' pot-likker. Couldn't relish dese French vittles for a long time. But it's reg'lar——"

"Chow ought to be up most any minute now. I'll——"

"Cap'n, Ah dunno. Ah done foun' out Ah'm a fightin' man. Ole Gran'mammy Caledonia, she done daid. Most of them Galveston niggers is trash niggers. An' so——" he flashed his white teeth—"Ah ain't vexin' mahself 'bout after de wah. Be a wah, long as Ah'm heah. Dis here's a fightin' bunch, dis Première Division de la Maroc." He pronounced the words like a native. "Las' week we was fightin' over in front of dat town Rheims. Three-four times Ah been in fights over that way. Dey throws us in when de w'ite sogers—less'n it's de *Chasseurs d'Alpin* or *la Légion*—jus' natcherly can't cut de mustard. Dat's how come we heah. We goes in, an' we breaks de line, an' we comes out. We is quality folks our ownselfs! Only, eve'y time we comes out, a lot don' come out wid us.

Ah got a chahm, an' all dese African boys got chahms—but we all killable. Ah done got huht five time. But Ah's tough; Ah comes back. Ah——”

“How do you get on with those African fellows?”

“Gets on fine, sah. Ah talk dere talk—allus pick up a wuhd easy—Ah uster to talk wid dem Greeks what take de Gulf Fish'ries boats down to Campechey. An' Mexicans. Dey fights, an' den dey got a game like craps, only diff'runt. Ah get along.”

“All Mohammedans, ain't they?”

“Dat's it. ‘Allah-il—’” He threw back his head and intoned strangely, then laughed like a child.

“That's it,” said the lieutenant. “Heard you in the woods yesterday. ‘Allah is one god, and Mohammed is his prophet.’ Means something like that?”

“Reckon so, sah—don't know it in mah talk. We got a pahson wid us—only we calls him a mullah. He tell you all that. He say, if you get killed fightin' you go straight to paradise—I reckon. Paradise, it's a place, neah as I can make out, where dere's lots of gin an' women, an' a right good game goin' in the corneh. Kinder like ole Queen Laura's place on Chu'ch Street, only dere ain't no p'lice. It's a right good religion fer a fightin' man. Ah jined.”

“Well, you did first-rate in the woods yesterday. Was with some of you—only troops we ever met that could keep up with the Marines.”

“Cap'n, ain't it de troof! We seen you-all in dere.

Ole Boche thought Chris'mus come sho-nuff! We hit him an' you hit him!"

Well, why not? The slavers bartered for slaves with the strong coast-tribes of West Africa. The coast-tribes captured some in war, but caught most of them by raids on the low, weak peoples—poor creatures with depressed skulls, from the Congo swamps under the Equator, just a hair removed from the gorillas. Now and then a sprig of one of the great black races, taken in battle, or betrayed in some quarrel around a throne, might be thrust into a consignment of black ivory, bound to Marblehead or Baltimore—the strain would persist. And there have been great black races, like the fighting Zulus. One remembers Lobengula and El Mahdi, the prophet of God, whose naked warriors made vast trouble for British Imperial troops armed with Martinis and Gatling-guns.

"'Bout goin' back—no, sah. But Ah sho' is glad Ah seen you, sah. An' w'en you gits back to Galveston, Ah'd be mighty proud if you would get aroun' to see— Hit pears to me, sah, like your grub done ready."

The lieutenant got to his feet. The Marines were lining up, hopefully, on the galley. The mess-sergeant approached, looked sadly at the negro, and saluted.

"Pipe for chow, sir?"

"Let 'em have it, mess-sergeant. And say, you take this man and fill him up. Yes, he's a friend of mine. All right, let's see what you've got. It ain't greens and side-meat, boy, but it ain't Frog rations, either." He in-

spected the food sketchily and dived into a mess-kit himself.

Later the major sent for him over some detail or other. When he got back to the company, they moved down into Vierzy and slept in a cave. Then they went out, and a week afterward the division shook down in a delightfully quiet sector near Pont-à-Mousson. They heard, there, that Mangin's X^e Army had attacked again, along the Chemin-des-Dames. The lieutenant, on his way to Nancy for a twenty-four-hour leave, stopped by Division Headquarters and drank wine with that elegant liaison-officer, the Comte Le Febre.

"Yes, I have heard," said the comte, savoring his wine. He had a silver plate in his head, and his left hand was always gloved, because it was artificial. He had been with Mangin in the Champagne the year before, and was interested in the X^e Army. "Ah, yes, it was a *pas de bec*. Quite the greatest artillery concentration we ever effected; one fears there was too much, for it warned the Boche. He was, as you droll chaps say, all set for us. That cave region, you know. We had heavy losses and gained little. The 1st Moroccan Division? Yes, those poor niggers—they suffered many casualties. I understand that some battalions were destroyed entirely. . . . I beg pardon?"

"And I don't even know his name—pardon me, comte—I just thought of something. . . ."

THE CONQUEST OF MIKE



II

THE CONQUEST OF MIKE

THE service-record book of Mike Guantánamo, private, U. S. Marine Corps, shows that he joined the guard of the flag-ship, Caribbean station, when that swanky cruiser put in for her annual small-arms practice. It is further noted that he was born there, under McCalla Hill, where the trades unceasingly flail the blue bay, rimmed around with barren amethystine hills. The first sounds his baby ears heard were the Marine bugles at the Fish Point Barracks, and the first men he saw in his life were the tall leathernecks of the station-guard. Other data in his staff returns, duly signed by his proper seniors, give his height as 11 inches at the shoulder; weight, 22 pounds stripped; vision, 20/20 each eye—(noted: can see a bone better than that); religion, Scalawag; next of kin and home address, mother, Bessie, care Sergeant Eisenberg, M. B., N. S., Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Complexion, black but comely, with four white feet. Filed with the other service records of the flag-ship's guard.

Reared thus among the bugles, imbibing the air of the profession of arms with his mother's milk, it was perfectly natural that he should follow his destiny down to the sea in the first battle-wagon that came along without

a mascot. He took to his flag-ship billet without a rub. By the time his ship was shaken down for her cruise around the banana-ports, Private Mike was as integral a part of her guard as the first sergeant. He knew all the bugle calls. He had his station for all the drills. Fire and Collision—you fall in at the port quarter for that. Abandon Ship—his place was in No. 2 motor launch; and when the high shrill notes of General Quarters went, he was on No. 5 gun-crew, and he would cock a wise ear and scud like a black shadow to his own place—present and accounted for, sir! When full guard and band were called away to the quarter-deck for the reception of distinguished visitors, or to attend the official goings and comings of the admiral, Mike formed up to the left of the left guide, facing the gangway, motionless as a blob of ink on the white planking; until the Captain of Marines rasped out “Pr’sent—Hupp!” and the starched and shiny khaki ranks snapped up their rifles with one precise sound. Then Mike would elevate his smart slim body on his haunches, and stand as steady as the best of them. Placed so, he caught the eye of admirals and generals and others of the great, and received their compliments with composure.

Private Mike enjoyed the esteem of his own admiral, and had the privileges of the admiral’s sacred hatch, and the admiral’s barge, should he desire to go ashore at other than boat-hours. It was, altogether, a good ship for a little dog, and he loved it; but he loved operations ashore

best of all. "Away, Landing Force" always found his black head over the gunwale in the Marines' boat, between the automatic rifles. Ashore, he charged along the



Mike would elevate his smart slim body on his haunches, and stand as steady as the best of them.

ramp, yapping excitedly, while the men doubled up from the landing to form on the road, and at "Squads right—March!" he swung smartly from the line of file-closers to his highest pride—a post one pace front and right of the Captain of Marines. This put him front and centre of the column; the Marines led the landing force, and Mike led

the Marines. Occasionally he would drop back and leap at the captain's hand, just to assure his officer that everything was going well; it was plain that he felt his honors and responsibilities. Balboa, where the flag-ship lived at a buoy by the cross-roads of the world while not engaged in government business up and down the sea, knew Mike and learned to look for him when the flag-ship's people came ashore. . . . A fine, taut little dog, elegant and ebony, his tail cocked at a three-quarter curve over his stern, leading three hundred sailors and Marines. . . .

It is pleasant to relate that his conduct was for the most part exemplary—as was the guard's—under the hand of that large, jovial, and competent officer, Captain Steve Blade. Mike's book showed only one offense, a regrettable A.W.O.L., for which his commanding officer awarded him a week's solitary on dry bones and water. It was well known that a low Costa Rican slut from Port Limón was to blame; King David also fell. Nor did Mike sulk under punishment; discipline must be maintained, and his captain knew just where to tickle a little dog's ears, and when one can be tickled without loss of dignity. Mike was convinced that Captain Steve was a god, greater even than the big first sergeant.

But in the fulness of time Captain Steve Blade accomplished his sea duty, and his relief reported aboard. Mike heard the Marines discussing it in No. 7 gun-compartment. . . . "Yeah—a tall, skinny captain. Came off in the 6.20 boat. His name—exec.'s writer told me his

name—what in hell was that name?—” “Anybody know him? What’s he done?” “Bozo, he says he’s heard of him—very diff’rent from Cap’n Steve, he is . . .” “You said it! They’re all diff’rent from Cap’n Steve!— What was it Bozo heard? . . .” Such matters are always of uneasy interest to the files, and Mike, his beady eyes going from face to face, sensed the uneasiness and was troubled. The curl went out of his tail, and he turned in early that night.

Next day was Saturday—commanding officer’s inspection. Mike stood this ceremony on the gun-deck, with his bunkie, the police sergeant. When the gold and white of the naval uniforms went by, there was a new officer in khaki with Cap’n Steve—the new Captain of Marines. Mike was brought up to be introduced, and surrendered his paw without enthusiasm. He was sure he would not like this fellow. He listened attentively to the talk of transfers that went around later. (There’s always such talk.) In the afternoon, Captain Steve Blade’s non-commissioned officers rowed him ashore in the whale-boat, and Mike never saw him again.

Now, an outfit takes its tone from its officers. Napoleon said once: “There are no bad regiments. There are only bad colonels.” Given proper recruit-training and decent non-coms, an organization will hang together and function after a fashion, but the officer transmits or kills the delicate thing called morale, that makes all the difference between a good outfit and a bad one. The new

captain understood this as well as any man. He had taken over a splendid weapon, this guard: 103 Marines, 80 rifles, 2 machine guns, and the 37-millimetre gun for landing force; it was an organization proved and competent and regarded with schooled respect by more than one frustrated Latin-American *junta*. He set himself diligently to learn it in all its parts, and to get the confidence of his people. The way to do that is to know your job—all your job—everything about it. The guard was quick to realize that, while this bird lacked the expansive personality of Cap'n Steve, he knew his stuff. He didn't talk much, but what he said meant something. And he did things. The guard conceded, somewhat grudgingly, that they were getting on about as well as ever. All except Mike, who was not consoled. When the new captain—who liked little dogs, in moderation—whistled to him one morning and would have fraternized, Mike affected not to hear, and retired under the overhang of the after turret, where he would not be subjected to the indignity of caresses. The guard, standing in ranks for Quarters, observed. The snub was utter and direct. Mike would have none of him. Dragged out by a scandalized sergeant, his manner plainly said that he would carry on if he had to—but as to permitting any familiarities, he'd see that captain in hell first.

The situation was more distressing when the landing force went ashore for drill. Private Mike, openly insubordinate, hid under the 3-inch field-piece. He was carried

over the side, regretting the day that he was born, and when the line swung into column and took the road, Mike was in the line of file-closers, with his tail at half-mast. Such a thing had never been seen before; the files stretched their necks at it, and the squads wavered all ways at once, so that the commander, landing force, a three-striper and a violent man, sent an orderly to the Captain of Marines: "Sir, the commander's compliments, and the commander says what in hell is the matter with the dress of the first company?" Things were not so good, and continued so. "Yuh take a dawg, a dawg's got an instinct about things," said the croaker of the guard darkly. "Yuh know, Bozo said he heard somethin' about this——"

One morning, about the start of the rainy season, the flag-ship lay at her buoy by the cross-roads of the world, and the hard-driven deck divisions, having scrubbed down with sand, were clearing for muster. The bright-work winked in the sun, and the colors blew out in a little wind from the open sea. The admiral took the air on his quarter-deck, his satellites around him. The ship hummed with ordered activity. Into this came a radio—and by some mysterious underground, all hands and the blue-jackets' cat, Nig, knew its contents almost before the Marine orderly was out of the flag-office with it. There were bugles, and yeomen dashed around in all directions, colliding violently with the commander's, the captain's, and the admiral's marine messengers. The engineer officer,

who had been having a quiet pipe aft, scuttled below to his engines. The fat paymaster bawled for a boat and hustled ashore with a working party to lay in ice and things. The admiral's barge foamed out with such of the staff as slept ashore. In their compartment, the Marines scoured rifles already speckless, and certain enthusiasts sharpened their bayonets with a file stolen from the armory. The gunnery-sergeant overhauled his ordnance, and the property-sergeant struck up field-equipment. The commander and his heads of department held conferences all over the place, and the ensigns of the landing force feverishly refreshed their minds from the Army Training Manual.

Three hundred miles north, at Puerto Dios, a nervous consul, having sent frantic radios to everybody he could think of, called on God, wished poignantly that he had taken up the ministry instead of the consular profession, and turned again to his charts and mileage tables, sweating profusely all over the consular stationery. For General Sangrado was coming down from the mountains—General Sangrado, the liberator, with the Army of Liberation, its appetite whetted with the loot of the capital. The general's manifestos sped before him like leaves before the gale. Several of these interesting documents lay on the consul's desk, flung there by certain heads of government, who had come with lamentable cries to take refuge in the consul's cellar, and firmly refused to take refuge anywhere else. Like Themistocles, or whoever it

was, they said they sought sanctuary under the ægis of the great Republic of the North. The consul reread a manifesto in which General Sangrado described himself as the Scourge of God, and mentioned particularly his methods with the corrupt and unspeakable minions of envious foreign nations, who polluted the sacred soil of the motherland by their robberies, and shielded traitors from justice. It was, the consul reflected, especially unfortunate that the captain-general, Angel Beaucrucis, whose federal army had been driven out of the capital, was at that minute hiding on the premises. The captain-general's federal army was also in town, assuaging its bruised honor with the rum of the country, having, as General Sangrado so strikingly put it, been scattered in ignoble confusion, like buzzards when the eagle of the mountain swoops. This did not help. To cap it all, the consular doors were continually bursting open to admit emphatic creatures of the Fruit Company, who told the consul that something must be done: get the United States fleet down here. If not, letters will be written to Washington. And talked a lot of wash about supine and incompetent political job-holders.

"Job-holders!" reflected the consul bitterly. Anybody could have his job for two cents Mex. This was the third time the country had been liberated in a year and a half. You got tired of it. The last time, an elegant parlor piece he'd brought down from Iowa—stuffed scarlet tangerines, under glass—had been quite ruined by a stray bul-

let. And the time before that, a liberator had run off with the consul's pigskin puttees and portable typewriter. The consul calculated, for the fourth time, the sea miles from Balboa to Puerto Dios.

Meanwhile, the flag-ship was standing out to sea. The chief had lit off every can; the black gang was set for watch and watch. All the hands whose duties permitted were gathered on the fo'c's'le, Mike, emerged from his *cafard*, among them, where the ship's singer, his brown throat bare, sang a song he'd made to the tune of "Spanish Ladies":

"Farewell and adieu to you, Panama mammas—
Farewell and adieu to you, Balboa janes——"

"Expedite," the radio said. Good enough; the old flag-ship had exceeded her designed speed in her first fight, when she expedited to get a shot at Cervera, the time that valiant man of Spain came out of Santiago to be sunk. And now her veteran engines again dug up extra knots—ten—twelve—even to nineteen she mounted; then settled to a steady eighteen knots and held on with a white bone in her teeth across the blue sea, so that her mud-hook rumbled down off Puerto Dios just after midnight some twenty hours later. The town was, for the most part, dark; nothing seemed to be afire. The Fruit Company's radio had communicated that General Sangrado planned to attack the next morning; he was bivouacking at the foot of the hills, inland. The consul, who came off in a

shore-boat and climbed the sea-ladder like a cat, confirmed all this and said he thanked God for the navy. The landing force embarked, and went ashore to get between the liberator and the town.

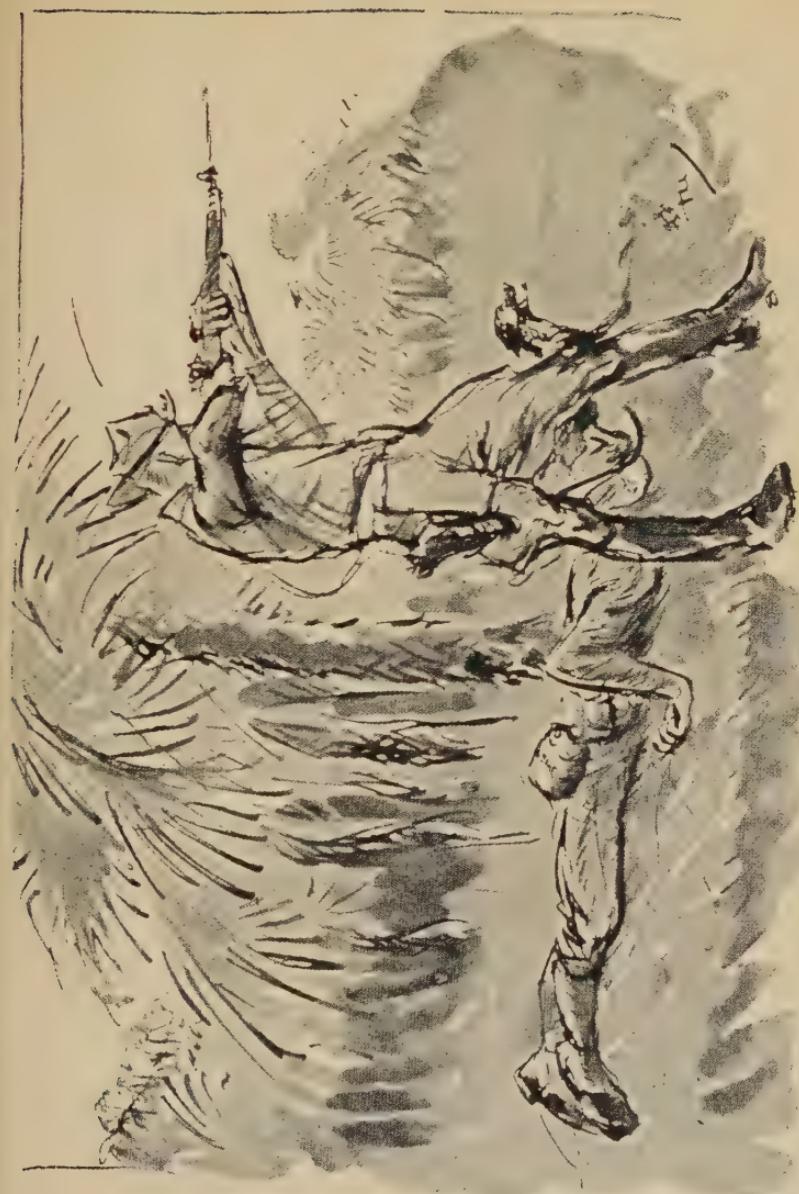
Puerto Dios is on a point, very pretty as you come in from sea—low red roofs and pastel-tinted walls, seen through the palms, and a sea-wall the *Conquistadores* built, where white surf makes eternal agitation. The railroad to the capital follows the old *Camino Real*, passing inland behind a ridge that starts out of town and angles away from the sea. This country beyond the ridge is covered with palmetto scrub; the Fruit Company's limitless plantations run the other way, up the coast. The landing force, five companies and the artillery section, felt its way through the dark to the beginning of the ridge, and filed along it to position, its right on the road, and the Marines extending the left.

It is not easy to take position at night on a terrain you have never seen, guided by a doubtful map and a Jamaican consular clerk who fancied that General Sangrado was twelve feet high and ate nigger babies. The landing force swore as spiny plants pricked their knees and mosquitoes got home on their hot necks, but they took up their ground. Inland from the ridge they could see a great many twinkling lights; the Jamaican said these were the camp-fires of the Army of Liberation. The Marines, who had the best view, watched them hopefully. "Reckon those birds'll fight?—" "Well, if they don't

find out it's us, they may give us a shot . . . no such luck, though." "Aw, they might—at ten to one, if they thought we had our pants down—but they don't fight—" "Well, how come the captain is rammin' us around in the dark, this away—why don't we wait?" "Shucks! he never fought anybody but the Germans and people like that. This war's diff'runt. . . ." "Pipe down, you animals—" "Automatic rifles—Aye, aye, sir!" "Mike's up forward—Sergeant Hughes is carryin' him——"

As well as he could in the dark, the captain sited his line and noted that the lights over yonder were going out. Nearly dawn; stars were getting pale; the air was gray with dawn. As the country revealed itself, he was concerned about his left—"No such luck as their fightin'—but in case they do—mustn't miss a chance . . . have to get my flank on something. . . . Consul says this Sangrado has a very smart German—ex-officer—with him. . . . That scrub forward—that's the way they'll come, if there's one savvy soldier among 'em—not by the road—Corporal Snair! take your squad and cover the front of the company—extend a little past my left—go a hundred yards or so from the foot of the ridge and see if anything's comin'. If they do come along, fall back on me, keepin' contact. If they are too close, file around the left—I'll watch for you. And report back!" Himself, he took his bugler, and went along the ridge beyond the flank.

The light was strengthening; the sky glowed like an



He picked up the Springfield and emptied the magazine, squeezing off every shot.

opal. The captain ran over his orders as he walked: "This is not punitive: it's entirely to maintain peace and protect lives and property in Puerto Dios. You are not to fire unless fired on, and then only in self-defense. You will not advance beyond this ridge. We are not taking sides with anybody—they can fight all they want to outside of Puerto Dios, but they can't fight there!" "Huh! Liable to run on us here, unbeknown-like, and somebody will get hurt. Nice position, though—Hi! Music, is that a ravine yonder?"

It was a ravine, starting near the top of the ridge and cutting back toward the sea. "Rest my flank on that—Music! beat it back to the gunnery-sergeant and tell him to bring his guns up here—on the double! Then tell Mr. Godby to extend the infantry platoon until he connects with me—" The music galloped off, and the captain lit a cigarette and studied the lie of the land.

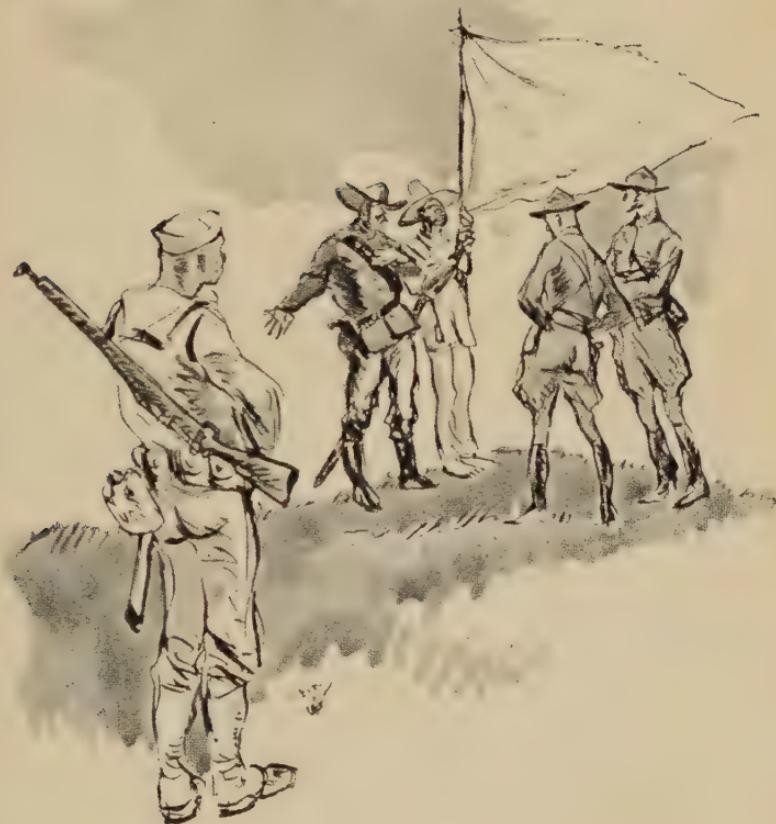
Down in the palmetto scrub, at the foot of the ridge, he heard movement. That would be the left-flank man; he started down toward it. Then there was a lot of movement—several men—"Corporal must have met some-thin'. That's a whole squad—filin' left—" There was a high Latin shout, and a shot—a Mauser! A spatter of shots, and the unmistakable answer of a Springfield. More shooting: a dog—Mike, surely—barked. The captain ran toward it, his pistol out. German fellow had his points forward, like a sensible man. The captain came upon a marine, behind a palmetto; the man, his shoulder

against the trunk, was striving desperately to straighten his sagging knees and get his rifle up—you could see his back-muscles strain, and there was a bright stain, widening, on his shirt. As the captain reached him, his knees gave way, and he dived on his face. Ahead the scrub cleared a little, and, beyond, straw sombreros bobbed



Private Mike, his four legs planted, his little black face quite furious.

among the fronds, and rifles flashed; the tang of smokeless powder caught your nose. The captain considered that he could not be sure with his gat. He returned it, picked up the Springfield, and emptied the magazine, squeezing off every shot. There were screams and a groan, and a receding trampling. He was aware of Private Mike, his four legs planted, his little black face quite furious. Laboring—it is no light matter for a 150-pound man to get another, quite as heavy, on his back and walk up-hill—he hauled his marine across his shoulders some way, caught up the rifle, and started back. It was not



. . . a fussed and perspiring Scourge of God came in under a white flag as big as a table-cloth.



pleasant. A great many rifles seemed to be attending him, and he couldn't run. But the palmetto was some cover, and he noted with satisfaction that none of the shots came from this side of the place where a man still screamed in a curious choked voice. "Damn it, in a war I'd get a Medal of Honor for this. Now nobody will see me, and if they did, it ain't a war, anyhow!" He reached the shelter of the crest, eased his man down, and felt with practised fingers. "Raked his lungs—high. Hell! The bird's dead!" He looked anxiously toward the centre—out farther than he thought—there they were, coming on the run. "Here you are, sergeant! Get into battery right here. Lay number one on that road, and number two—about eleven o'clock—range 250—"

The naval officer commanding came now, on the skyline with a commandeered horse. "What force they got? Get anybody? Can't see a thing from the right!—"

"Quite a few in the scrub, sir. Got one of my outposts. Mind yourself, sir—shooting at you—"

"Mind, yourself! They shoot first? Go on—rake out that scrub a little—got to attract their attention. . . ." And the heavy Brownings came into action—

The rest was without incident. The German fellow knew at once it wasn't the federals, and bade good-by to the Minister of War's portfolio that he had counted on. Presently a fussed and perspiring Scourge of God came in under a white flag as big as a table-cloth to get his instructions. He protested, at length and with tears;

but from the ridge he saw the flag-ship lying off, all her guns trained out; and three hundred bluejackets and Marines watched him with wistful faces, like a cat looks at a canary bird. So he agreed to take his war up another alley. And that was that.

The captain sat on a rock among his Marines to watch the Army of Liberation file off toward the hills, and a damp, velvety muzzle came poking into his hand. Later, all things having been made peaceful, the landing force took the seaward road. Up forward the Marines stepped out, heads up, shoulders back, and pieces dressed, with just the touch of swank a crack flag-ship guard ought to show; and a whisper passed down from the front: "Say—say—d'yuh see it? Private Mike's back on his own station again!" Nobody stretched a neck to see—that wasn't discipline, but the company wise-guy in the last squad said, out of the corner of his mouth: "What did I tell you? Dawgs has instincts about these things. And Bozo, he knew the skipper before. He said, this skipper Jack—" "Silence in ranks, you!"

Puerto Dios observed, leading the column, a little black dog—an elegant, ebony little dog, with his head high and his tail curled in an arrogant three-quarter circle over his stern, who now and then dropped back to jump at his captain's hand.



The flag-ship lying off, all her guns trained out.



LUCK



III

LUCK

A COMPANY of German infantry and a machine-gun platoon lay in the three-cornered clump of trees on the forward slope of Hill 142, in the sector northwest of Château-Thierry, and listened incuriously to the racket in the thick woods that began six hundred yards away, across the wheat. By the white piping on their uniforms, they were Prussians, and by the ugly, confident look of them, with a touch of Berlin swank, they were Prussians of a very good division; and there were no better soldiers in the world.

They had come in after dawn and halted here in reserve while the rest of their battalion passed forward. They were old soldiers, salty and hard, and what happened out of sight was no affair of theirs; they only hoped that those *Feld-ratten* in the leading division would dispose of whatever it was. If not, they themselves would attend to it at the proper time.

Meanwhile the sun was an hour high, and pleasant on a field-gray back, and Paris and the end of the war only forty kilometres away. They sprawled at ease; some made careful entries in diaries—"Im Felde, 6 Juni, Kriegsjahr 4"—and some wrote letters, or slept, or abused their rations and their quartermasters, after the manner of soldiers the world over.

The *Herr Hauptmann* in command, a stocky young Rheinlander named Deinhardt, walked up and down behind them, cutting fretfully with his heavy crab-wood stick at the ferns that grew there. He was in a black humor, and his men eyed him nervously; most of them knew the weight of that stick he carried. He had not been with them long; he had come to the battalion in the reorganization after the great March drive in the north.

His much-enduring soldier servant whispered that he was the sole survivor of a battalion that destroyed itself against the English in front of Amiens, and that his dressing-case contained every medal a man could win, and that he was a terrible *Kerl* to live with. "That stick of his, *liebe Herr Gott!* If it was a dear little wife, he could make no more trouble about it! By his hand always, even when he sleeps. . . ."

His men sensed that he was a competent soldier, and let it go at that. The Prussian service was never noted for humanity. When your officer was angry, you kept out of his way if you could; otherwise, you set yourself and stood it.

He was angry now; the *Herr Oberst* commanding the battalion had just passed and talked with him, and the conversation sat heavily on his stomach. At sunrise something had started in the front line, which ran through the woods yonder and angled away to the left in the direction of the wood called Belleau. There had been orders

to advance this day, to proceed astride the Paris-Metz road toward Montreuil and Meaux. And just as our brave fellows were getting into position, said the *Oberst*, those obstinate fools over there attacked! There had been a little shelling from the enemy—not much, for it was well known that the French lost all their guns on the Chemin des Dames the other day—and then there was a mounting crackle of rifle-fire.

German machine guns had opened up, and it had not at first sounded dangerous. But now the volume of machine-gun fire, which set the tempo of every German battle, was appreciably lighter, and the rifles sounded nearer. A purely local action, decided the *Oberst*, but it did not look so good at this moment. The *Oberst* had sent two companies up to the front line; that should be enough, but Deinhardt, with the battalion reserve, would be prepared to fight where he was in the unlikely event that the enemy came so far.

“If it is permitted to ask, *Herr Oberst*, what troops——”

Unfortunately, there were as yet no prisoners. Fresh French troops, perhaps, from the garrison of Paris, which we will certainly have by the day after to-morrow! Some of their good colonials, it may be, for they are in khaki. There was a rumor yesterday about Canadians, but the High Command has not reported any Canadians moved from the north—Old Rupprecht and his Bavarians are keeping those God-accursed English busy in the north.

And, said the *Oberst*, some fool of an *Unteroffizier*, a

little wounded, came back with a tale that Americans were attacking! The *Oberst* laughed augustly, as all good Germans did when the American myth was mentioned. It just showed you, said the *Oberst*, what came of taking these sheepsheads out of the ranks and making officers of them, even underofficers! For his part, he had always been against the practice; it touched the honor of the Corps of Officers. He went on his way, an impressive figure, although a little knock-kneed.

The *Hauptmann* turned to his men, regretting that he was not dug in. Well, the machine guns were emplaced, and his position would be very deadly to any enemy who tried to cross that wheat in front of him! Those rifles, now—yes, they were much nearer. He recognized the whanging of a Hotchkiss gun, and the rattle of chaut-chaut fire; but those rifles—they certainly did not sound like French rifles.

He directed his signalman to test communications with the battery assigned to the support of the battalion; all clear, *Herr Hauptmann*, the fellow reported. That battery, by the way, was furiously in action. Presently all the batteries in the area were furiously in action, and that was a bad sign!

In the woods, just across the wheat, a German machine gun began to fire. Hand-grenades went off, and there was a clangor of rifles. Then the Maxim gun stopped, suddenly, finally, and Deinhardt was certain he heard a Lüger pistol. Also, a confused babel of shout-

ing. Close, that! Thank the dear God, he had taken routine range data from his position.

"*Feldwebel*—go up that tree there and observe the face of the woods. On the run!" The observation would be poor across the wheat.

A few gray figures came into the wheat, running. The *Feldwebel* called down: "*Herr Hauptmann!* Our men retreat from the wood! *Herr Hauptmann*—the enemy comes from the wood—a platoon—two platoons—more are in the wood."

"Call firing directions according to the marks we have ranged," barked Deinhardt.

His war-wise people were on the alert before he blew his whistle. Bolts clicked, non-commissioned officers grunted commands, and the charging levers of the machine guns snicked back. The level light flickered on the broad Prussian bayonets with saw-edges. The light flickered, too, on bayonets yonder across the wheat.

"Six hundred metres. *Herr Hauptmann*, a company, in waves—five hundred and fifty metres." The *Feldwebel's* voice was level and expressionless. "Five hundred metres."

Deinhardt could see them now, tall men in khaki, not widely deployed, coming in waves across the wheat—Canadians, yes? At three hundred metres he opened fire, without haste or excitement. In the first war year he would not have waited so long, but now he believed in heavy fire at close range; it did the job more effec-

tively, and you got all the wounded. He laid his stick across the shoulders of a man who was fumbling with his sights, and noted with professional keenness that his fire was excellently effective, and the enemy too closely grouped.

“*Pfui!* what waste, to huddle them like that! One cannot miss.”

The leading waves melted while he looked at them. Another minute, and the wheat where they had been was clean. His riflemen ceased firing, and squad leaders made rough jokes along the line—fine fellows, thought Deinhardt, these old soldiers of the Guards Corps!

“They will go back, now. Signalman, direct the guns to place shrapnel in the edge of the wood—sheet F, seventy-seven point eighty-six to eight point nine.” He ordered slow fire from the machine guns on the flanks, to sweep the ground for wounded.

Then rifles spoke in the wheat, and a keening rush of bullets ripped through the coppice.

“*Herr Hauptmann!* They crawl forward in the wheat. *Herr Hauptmann!* They crawl to the left, by the flank—the wheat can be seen to move. Quickly, with the left section.” The *Feldwebel* gave a choking cough and fell from the tree, his body striking the branches with an odd, thick sound. He hung in a crotch near the ground, head downward. There was a hole in his forehead, and the back of his head was blown out.

Thereafter it closed upon them as a nightmare closes.

The firing from the wheat grew in volume, and the enemy fired low. A gust of steel-jacketed bullets found a group of infantrymen who were standing up for better sight, and they went down in a crumpled heap. A line of the enemy rose in front, astonishingly near and huge, and rushed, yelling; but a machine gun swung that way and cut them down like a scythe; the wheat did not move where they fell. The rifles tore the coppice.

A spatter of firing came from the left, fairly on the flank. There were two guns there, but they could not be traversed quickly enough, and their gunners sprawled across them in odd, twisted attitudes. Something violent plucked Deinhardt's field-glass from his breast. He shifted his stick to his left hand and drew his pistol. The fire of his riflemen slackened.

"Donnerwetter! are all the dogs shot?"

One chalk-faced private with staring near-sighted eyes—one of the recruits—rose up to run, and Deinhardt dispassionately pistolled him. One gun was still firing; while Deinhardt looked, a brown rush of men rolled over it; he saw one of them seize the spitting muzzle and rear it backward, and bayonets flashed up and down, and a rifle-butt rose and fell.

Then the enemy, lean-faced and long-legged men, were around him.

The machine gunners were dead. Some of his infantry broke and ran; a few threw down their rifles and cried "*Kameraden!*"—and furious straining figures and frantic

straining figures streamed past him, and there was confused noise in which there was no sound that you could name, but only screaming tumult.

Deinhardt found himself looking into the muzzle of an extraordinarily large and ugly automatic pistol, and his hands went up, his pistol in one and his stick in the other, both forgotten.

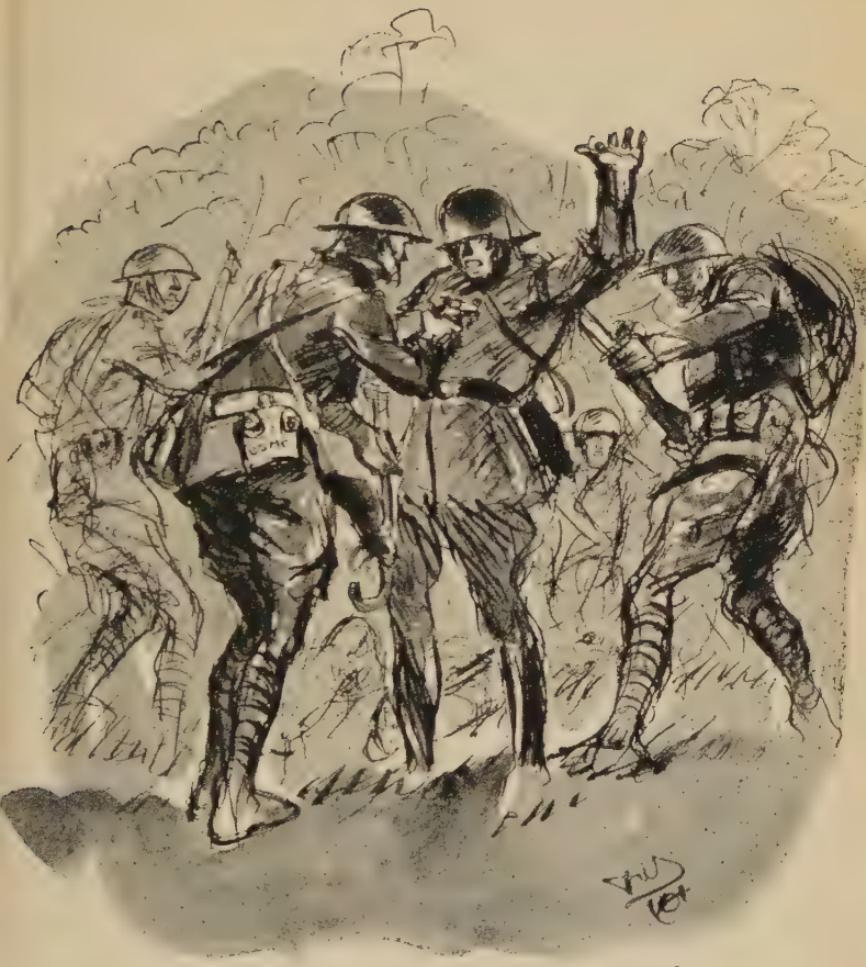
His captor was a slim young officer in a greenish uniform with little silver bars on his shoulders. He looked curiously at the German, and spoke in a quiet voice to a big dark soldier by him. The soldier wrenched Deinhardt's pistol away, and addressed him in careful Heidelberg German:

“The lieutenant says, what troops are you?”

There was another question or two, and then, with an apologetic grin, the lieutenant reached for Deinhardt's stick, which was still clutched above his head. Deinhardt cried aloud and drew back sharply, his eyes blazing. At once the pistol was between the third and fourth buttons of his tunic, and the soldier's bayonet was under his armpit.

“Oh, don't ram that thing in him—no use,” drawled the lieutenant, possessing the stick. “What's he sayin'?” For Deinhardt burst into passionate gutturals.

“Sir, he says,” translated the soldier, “that this here cane's his good luck, charm, or something like that. Says he's carried it all through the war. Says he carried it at Verdun, an'—an' all those places. Says if you take it



Deinhardt found himself looking into the muzzle of an extraordinarily large and ugly automatic pistol.

he'll get killed. Says take his watch, take anything he's got, but leave him his stick."

"So he was at Verdun, was he? Well! An' it's a good-luck charm, hey? Listen, you tell him he's goin' back to a nice jail in the S. O. S. somewhere, an' I've got to go on with this war, an' I need good luck bad! I'll just take his stick. *Bitte schön, Herr Boche*—good German, ain't it? It's a nice stick—I'll keep it to remember him by. Sergeant, put a casualty in charge of these Heines and send 'em back. Get me some kind of a line here! All right, you birds—get goin'—automatic rifles, this way. Tritt, you grave-robber, come out of that Boche's clothes! Let's go!"

The attack went on, and Deinhardt's stick with it, and a brisk casualty with a bloody head herded Deinhardt and twenty odd prisoners into column of fours and started back across the wheat.

And Deinhardt went in a sick cold fear, the like of which he had never known.

Four years ago, a cadet in his last term, he had stood with his classmates and drunk Madeira wine to The War. "*Gott sei dank*," they cried, "it has come in our time!" And his father, a terrible and bush-bearded old man with the 1870 war medals, gave him ceremoniously the ugly crab-wood stick, taking it from the wall where it hung with a long sword of the *Gardedragonier*.

"Pay attention, thou! I carried this at Gravelotte, and over the cemetery wall at St. Privat, where all the

King's Guards died, but I took no harm. Carry it, thou! There is luck in it. No good German fears to die—I give it not for that; but a dead soldier's no good to anybody. Make the enemy die!"

And young Deinhardt had carried it down to the Marne country, as far as Guise and the St. Gond morass, with Paris ahead, a vision bright as the *Rheingold*. And back from Guise, with those venomous Frenchmen in preposterous red pantaloons following like hornets. Thereafter war, until he could not remember another existence. East front and west front, and in the south, beyond Austria, where you looked as the eagle looks down on the plains of Italy.

Of all those junkers who drank to The Day, he alone was left in service. And nothing touched him. Even the typhus in the Balkans passed him by. There had been promotion and honors, and the stick became an obsession. He believed quite implicitly that it kept the bullets off, beginning with that day, far back on the Aisne, when, leaning idly against a tree, he dropped the stick by chance; he had stooped to recover it, and a sniper's bullet had thudded into the bark where his head had been.

Now it was gone, and he did not want to die, or be messed up by a shell.

"Allay, allay now!" The casualty with the bloody head hustled his charges through the wood, where many bodies lay and German shells were falling, and through a battered little town, and along a rutty road across the

fields. The casualty halted his convoy and spoke with an individual who rested by the road.

"Say, guy, where's Regimental—the Fifth, what I mean?"

"The Fit'? It's that there little farm, like, up there a piece. How come you goin' there? Ain't no place to go. You go 'long this road to a farm bein' shelled like blazes, an' that's yo' regimental. You got to go there?"

"Yes—th' lootenant says, take these birds to regimental, an' say the Forty-ninth took 'em. So I takes 'em, shells or no shells. Then I'm goin' to turn in to the sick bay. I got a right smart nick on the conk. Oughter be good for a liberty in Paris, huh? Aw—no good goin' through 'em. Everybody I met done gone through 'em. Ain't a Iron Cross left." He turned to his prisoners. "Allay, you Heines!"

Then Deinhardt knew, with the strange foreknowledge which comes to men sometimes, that he was finished. . . . It was a shell from his own people, and it fell at the head of the little column. There was a vomit of earth and black smoke where the head of the column had been. Those prisoners who lived grovelled on the road and made animal noises; the casualty with the bloody head picked himself out of the ditch and shot one Heine who had made off across the field, screaming.

The casualty spat dirt from his mouth and considered: "Here's a hell's delight—bet th' lootenant blames me, too! An' it sho' killed my officer-bird dead—wasn't for

his leather puttees, you couldn't tell which was him. Well! He was a mean-lookin' guy, anyhow. Hope I kin get the rest of them turned in. Allay, you!"

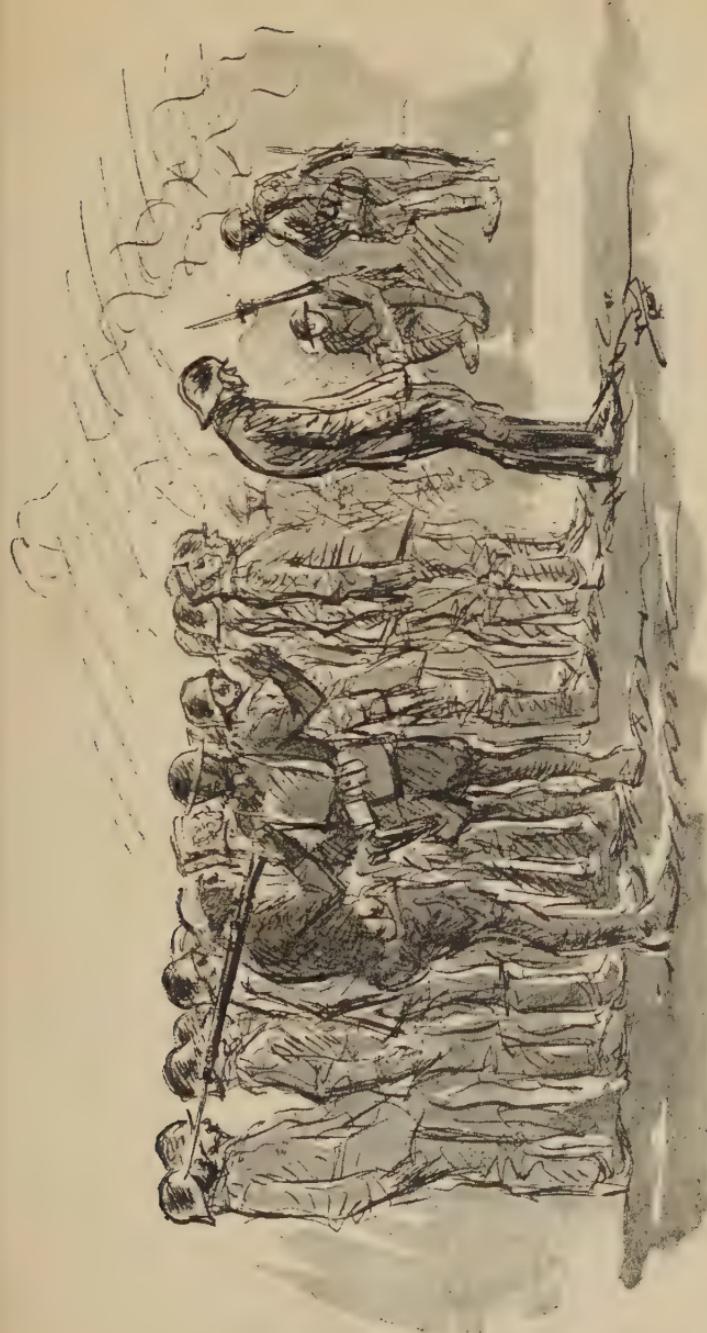
Shrapnel beat hideously on a hillock in the Champagne country, east of Reims. The remnants of a battalion of the Marine Brigade clung there, rolling back with rifle-fire a mounting tide of Germans. The machine guns were out of action, and the platoons were whittled down to squads, when a runner got through from regimental: "Move to the left and link up with the 2d Battalion."

"About time," said the senior captain, in command, looking at the casualties around him. "Be nobody to move in a little while— Turn to—get the wounded up and proceed by companies to the right through those woods. Sixty-sixth first."

The companies, thirty men in this, twenty odd in that, less than two hundred out of a thousand who started in the misty October dawn, filed off toward the new position. The Boche artillery continued to flail the corpse-cluttered hillock.

It was quieter in the new position, and there was some cover. The Boche was firing, but most of his stuff went high. The Marines covered their ground as well as they could.

"Where's my second in command? He started down the hill with us—only officer I had left, damn him"! The skipper of the left centre company swore with deep feeling.



“You go 'long this road 'till you get to a kind of a farm, bein' shelled——”



"Seen him goin' back, sir," volunteered a corporal. "Said he'd forgot somethin'. Lawdamighty! Yonder he is now!"

Looking back over the tortured way they had come, they saw the lieutenant.

He was plodding along with his head down, leaning on his stick, and supporting the sagging figure of a wounded man. Many jets of dust around his feet showed that the Boche was attending him with continuous rifle-fire, but he came in miraculously unscratched, and the battalion's surviving hospital corpsman took over the casualty.

The lieutenant flung himself into the commodious shell-hole occupied by the captain and regarded certain tears in his raincoat with a rueful eye. "Brand-new Burberry —cost two hundred an' eighty-five francs in Nancy not a month ago. Dam' war's sure hard on your clothes, I'll say. How's that, sir?"

The captain expressed himself with a fluency that was appalling. "You think officers are so plenty around here that you can go and get yourself bumped off like that?" he concluded. "What'd you go back for, anyway—chasin' a D. S. C. or something? Well, I ain't gonna recommend you—I'll tell you that! Plain fool! And not havin' you here, I had to send Sergeant Hamilton out there to secure that flank, an' the slant-head got himself killed."

The lieutenant looked up from his damaged coat apologetically. "Know it was sort of feeble-minded, sir, but when we moved, I'd been shootin' a rifle, an' I forgot this

old stick. Carried it since Hill One-forty-two, you know—sort of feel naked without it. I went back to get it, an' the sergeant was there, so I just brought him along too."

The intimate shadow of the box-elders held them. His white uniform and the filmy dress she wore were one pale blur where they sat. Moonlight drenched the world, and a mocking-bird sang from the pear-tree across the lawn, and a cool little wind made drowsy noises through the intervals in his song. It was very dark under the box-elders. Some moonlight filtered through the branches and lay around them in a gently moving, inconsequential pattern that showed you nothing. He wanted to see her face.

"For it's gone by too fast, my leave," he complained. "A month, and then ten days' extension—and Headquarters won't give me any more. And I don't want to go without—I don't want to leave you. All these fellows buzzing around—and I'll be in China or some place." He tried to speak lightly. "All these essential-industry chaps that kept the home-fires burning." He bit off his words—bad tactics, to knock your rivals.

She took him up: "Now, Micky—you know that's not fair! Edward tried time after time to enlist, and he felt very bad because they wouldn't take him. And C. J. was reporting in the draft or something when they signed the Armistice. And Jim was exempted——"

"Please, honey! I was just jokin'. Different with me—I was in the service before the war"—change the subject, quick!—"and I've been away a right long time. Then, when I came and saw you at the station with Sis, all those years and places and things—they just dropped out, and I was back——"

There was no pleasing the woman. "Yes, back with that leggy girl you used to play around with," she quoted demurely.

"It wasn't fair to read my letters to Sis."

"But she showed them to me. And—I wanted to know about you, in all that horrible fighting."

Then a finger of moonlight drew across her face and, leaning close, he saw that her eyes were darkly luminous and very tender. His heart turned over inside him, and he put his arms around her and kissed her, hard. Thereafter, holding her tightly, he talked at length. Never especially articulate with girls, he discovered now language that surprised him. And when a word lacked, her mouth, shyly responsive, was near enough.

Then there were no more words, and the world lay away from them like an opalescent mist pierced through very sweetly by the silvery jets of the mocking-bird's ecstasy. The perfume of her hair was in his nostrils, and a strand of it lay across his cheek, and in the silence he knew that her heart was beating against his, and one dreamed things unutterably sweet.

The girl straightened and removed herself from him

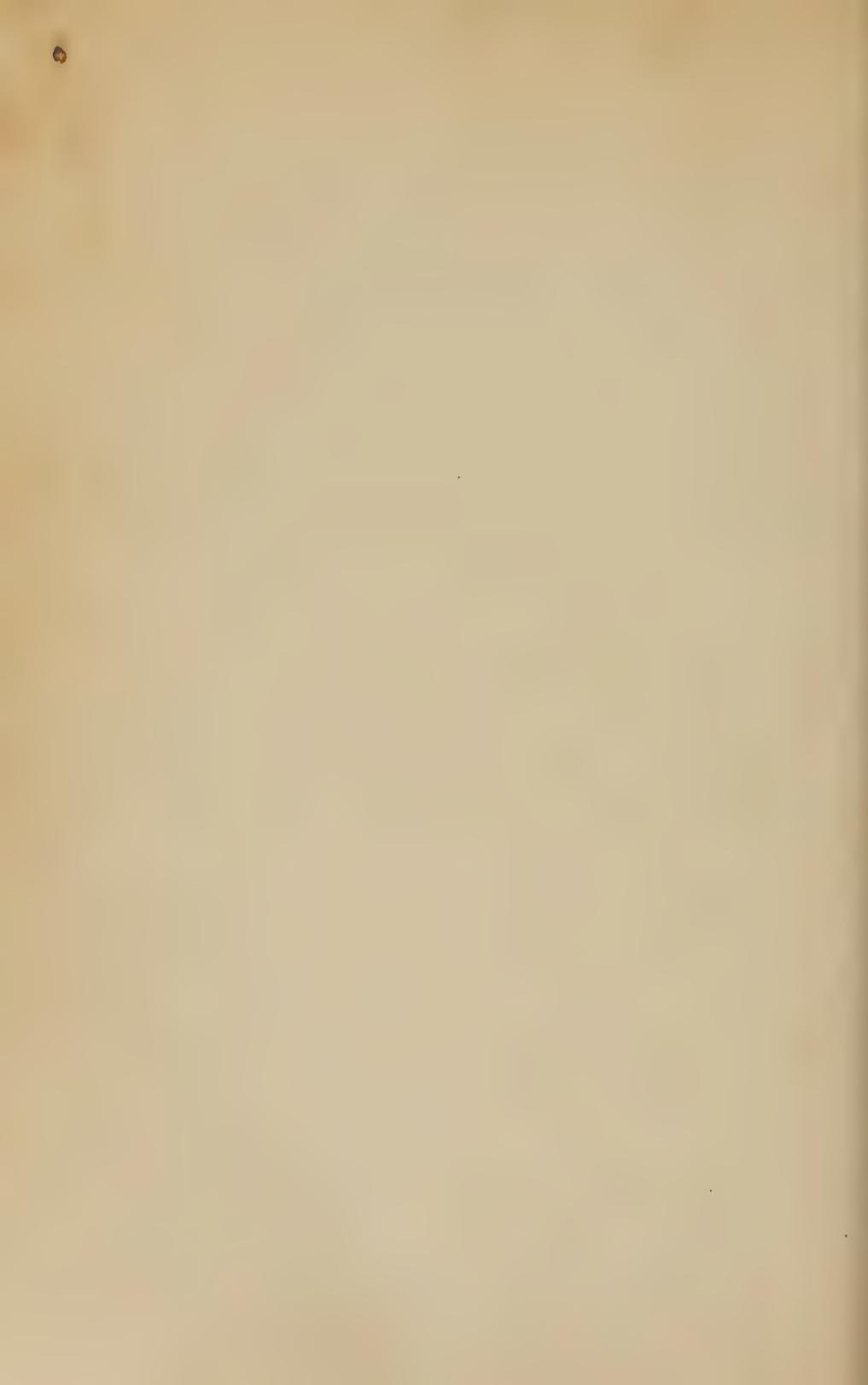
with decision. She drew a long breath, and her hands went to her hair. "No," she said, from the other end of the bench. "No. You'll just stay over there. I want to tell you something. And if you're close to me, I can't. So stay there. Micky dear, please try to understand!" She spoke with a gentle definiteness, and it presently dawned on him, amazingly, that he was receiving what amounted to marching orders. "For I've got to be sensible, Micky. I never bothered to be sensible before, because—I think, because I've never been so—attracted. But you're talking about lifetimes. And a woman wants to feel safe, Micky, most of all. Oh, my dear, I'd never feel safe with you. Men can't understand, but a woman's built that way."

"Why, why—" he protested.

"Yes, I know. And I've always thought of you differently from other men. You were a sort of person out of a story, dashing around the way you did—and then uniforms and wars and things. And you make love very beautifully, Micky—you've had so much practice with so many girls, I know. That's all very well for a lover, Micky—you're a wonderful one—just perfect—but I want a home, too, and my man in it. I don't want letters from Hayti and Shanghai and battleships and all those crazy places your old Marines go." Why the deuce an' all, he asked himself, had he harped so on foreign service? "I want my man around. You'd never be around, Micky—I'm afraid I'd never know just where you were. No,



One observed that the moonlight was a thin and sickly mockery.



no! You stay over there. I shouldn't have let you kiss me—I shouldn't——”

He felt for a cigarette, lighted it, and studied her face deliberately until the match burned his fingers. For a space he saw her eyes, suspiciously bright in the yellow flame, and not joyous. Then they closed, and there were tears on her lashes. Something caught savagely at his throat. He turned away.

Presently, having estimated the situation in a military manner, he accepted it and stood up. To blazes with this stuff about losing gracefully; he was conscious of the same red surge of anger that he had known a time or two in battle, when things did not get done and all effort appeared to be futile. Perhaps there were tactics, technic in this love business—just now he didn't think of any. He wanted to swear but he said, very gently:

“Well—anyway, you didn't give me any wash about wantin' to be a sister to me. And now it's late. Must catch that early train—promised old Paul Wakefield to spend a couple days with him in Houston, goin' north.” Old Paul would be surprised. “I think I left my cap on the gallery.”

They walked across the lawn, a yard apart. One observed that the moonlight was a thin and sickly mockery, through which, from somewhere, came the obscene chittering of an idiotic bird. He touched a small cold hand, jammed on his cap and went away.

Oh, well, Kipling was right—the superior man goes it

alone. And there were lots of girls. You found them all over the place. One remembered that sugar-planter's daughter, in the Islands, and the one in Washington, and that corn-flower blonde *Altessen* in Luxemburg—and at the moment, he found that he couldn't recall the face of one of them!

No— There never was a girl like this, like a flower and like a flame; a girl who'd get up early to play tennis or go duck-shooting on the lake, a girl who shot and rode like a slim, quick boy, and who would listen to poetry. A girl with level eyes and firm hands, gracious, and merry, and born to tall, white-columned Southern porches; a girl of his own people . . .

He'd beat it to Washington and get that detail to the Asiatic Station; might be a new war out there . . . "I hope she marries that leadin' groceryman an' has triplets . . ."

Flowers grew pleasantly by the sidewalks in this old Texas town; he drew back his arm to slash at an impudent nodding cluster—and his hand was empty. He'd left his stick at her house—forgotten it when he picked up his cap. He halted and swore profoundly. He didn't want to see her again. Didn't want to see anybody. If he went around in the morning—train left early, but she might be up. "No. By now, she's probably turned in. And I left it by the front door, I remember." He retraced his steps with decision. He could tell, if her light was out—knew her window . . .



Every long curve of her moulded against him.



A week ago he had brought her in after dark from some run or other. "Micky will stay to supper, of course," they said; and a negro maid showed him up-stairs. Later, coming down, the door of her room was open, and he took one side-glance before he caught himself. You'd know it was her room, high and cool and white, and simple, with delicate chair and a tall mirror, and a narrow bed of pale magnolia wood, and sudden splashes of color here and there, like the way her temper blazed sometimes . . . "Ah—no right to think of such things." Yet a while ago, in a witchery of moonlight and shadow, with her pliant body in the curve of his arm, he'd dreamed . . . Oh, well—here was the place. He went up between the flowers—no light in her window. There was the old stick, against the white wall by the door.

There was a little stifled sound in the big porch swing yonder—something like a sob. He wheeled. She sat up, and they looked, seeing each other dimly. Her heels clicked on the floor; he took three long steps, and they stood close together. All the magic returned and the golden witchery, and the dream . . .

She said, in a small voice that he had never heard before: "Micky—you came back. Oh, I was afraid——"

"Did you want me to come back? Honey—honey—" And then he couldn't talk.

She was in his arms now, and after a while she said: "Micky—all those places—China and Panama and ali—I'll go along, too—and marine officers don't have to stay at sea all the time, do they Micky?"

Later, very much later, in his room, with her kisses alive and warm on his mouth, he nursed an old and battered crab-wood stick across his knees. "I'll make Headquarters give me duty on the East Coast first. Then—she's been around a lot, but she's never seen the blue water down in the Islands, and the white beaches. She'll like all that. And . . . God bless that Heine at Hill 142—hope he got through all right. Hadn't been for his old cane . . ."

THE ODYSSEY OF A LITTLE DOG



IV

THE ODYSSEY OF A LITTLE DOG

THE cruiser's yearly overhaul in New York Yard was finished, and she cast off her lines. The deck trembled to the beat of the main engines and a tug nosed alongside to take hold. Up forward, a bugle went, one strong high note. The ensign at the stern came down and steaming colors ran up to the main gaff. Pier 8 slid from her, and the cruiser was under way.

The port quarter, where the Marines muster, was cluttered with wet Manila lines, and pools of water froze on the planking. Also, there was miscellaneous gear, last-minute matters pertaining to the harassed paymaster, boxes and bales and crates; and bluejackets scuttled to and fro among them on various small jobs. Further, the saluting-battery crew on the boat-deck just above was whipping the canvas covers from their little guns; so the captain of Marines led his tall fellows across the quarter-deck and formed the guard to starboard, facing the dock; they stood at ease, a hundred men in long gray-green overcoats. On the pier, there were no sweethearts or wives or such, for it's bad luck to watch your man's ship sail, but a few yard workmen waved, as somebody always waves to men who go down to the sea.

The Marine captain said to his junior by the life-line:

“Look—ain’t that our former gunnery-sergeant retirin’ up the dock yonder? The scoundrel shoved off without sayin’ *bon voyage* or anything. See him?”

“Yes, sir; I was talking to him below. Said he had a week-end liberty from Quantico; said he just stood by to see us off. I didn’t see him go over the side, though—oh, forward gangway, of course.”

“Well, he was a good man. Wish him joy. Still, we’ll get along with this new bird they sent us. Seems to know his profession. You know, I kinder thought old Murph would get off with Mike, havin’ him up with his folks to live since that last blizzard. Told me his mother was crazy about him—Mike, I mean. But a couple of the young men went up an’ got him last night. They knew Mike’s routine—watched for him on his little run-around before taps an’ shanghaied him in a taxi right under the nose of Murph’s old man, who was convoyin’ him. Reported him aboard just now, an’ accounted for expense money that I advanced.”

“Yes, sir. Murph did say, when he was transferred, that Mike would go with him—bet he was wild this morning! Murph always claimed Mike was his dog—but the guard wouldn’t be the guard without Mike.”

A bugle blew “Attention!” They rounded into the stream, and the saluting guns rendered the prescribed honors to the Commandant’s flag. Manhattan Bridge and Brooklyn Bridge loomed over the cruiser’s housed topmasts. On the starboard hand the fabulous towers

of New York, whitened a little by last night's snow, receded under a pale winter sun that had no heat or color in it. The guard, standing easy and shuffling their feet in the bitter wind, looked briefly on the Statue of Liberty that was silhouetted in the harbor haze, and turned their faces toward the bow and the sea in waiting outside the Narrows.

"Dam' foolishness, standin' top-side in this breeze," grumbled the captain of Marines.

"Old man's all for dog, regardless. Rest!" and the guard relaxed and talked among themselves.

"Fourteen thousand miles last cruise—wonder what we log, this."

"Well—be back next year."

"Yeh, an' it's time to shove off now—money's all spent; girls all kissed—an' there's better likker in Panama!"

"An' she says to me, she says, 'My beautiful blue-eyed bozo, you goin' off for a year on that fool ship, an' if you think this baby will wait that long on any guy, you're all wet—I'll say you are.' "

"Naw—it don't cost any more down there than it does up here, an' you know what you're gettin'!"

"Tell you about this broad I fell in wit' last night? It was right by—"

"Belay! there's retreat."

The line stiffened.

"Guard—'tention! First sergeant—dismiss the guard."

Returning the salute, the captain ran a practical eye down the line. "Hi—Bogert! where's Mike?"

"Sir, he was right here jus' before quarters went."

Presently there was dismay on the gun-deck where the Marines live. The captain and the lieutenant stood by Gun 7, and they were angry men. The non-coms and the second-cruise fellows raged all together. And a pimply-faced recruit who had toted his sea-bag aboard an hour before sailing said helpfully:

"If you-all's lookin' for that little black dawg, I saw a gunn'ry-sergeant stick him in his overcoat just when we-all went up-stairs."

"So you did, hey, you——"

"Well, seh, I never knowed—he said it was all right when he seen me lookin' at him, an' he told me to go fall in; besides, he was a gunn'ry-sergeant"—for the recruit was just from Parris Island, where a gunnery-sergeant is the peer of kings . . .

"And," concluded the captain of Marines, when he could think of no more words, "old Murph put it over. The lousy scalawag! An' I make you my compliments, you bladder-headed animals, you, that let one man come aboard in the daytime an' get what he wants and walk off with it—thank the Lord he didn't happen to want one of my five-inch guns or something, besides Mike. Police sergeant—take this—this—this critter here"—indicating the distressed recruit—"an' instruct him about ladders an' hatches an' so forth. Up-stairs, good Lawd!"

Have I got a flag-ship guard or a bad dream?" And the cruiser went out into winter weather on the western ocean at its worst.

The destroyer people, whose little tin boats run up and down continually on all the seas, say that the Atlantic, between Bar Harbor and Crooked Island Channel, is the worst water you'll find. This day there were hurricane signals up from Barnegat to Palm Beach, and the cruiser bucketed south through all of it. Her new drafts were a moaning tangle of misery on gun-deck and berth-deck and every place a man might lie, and not until she raised Cat Island Light and saw a great golden dawn break over the white beaches of San Salvador did things abate enough to open the gun-shutters. She anchored in Guantánamo Bay with salt crusted to her stacks, and her bluejackets swarmed at once over the side and all about to scrub her clean again, and the Marines went off as soon as her boats were in the water, to make a camp for rifle practice.

Guantánamo is where the ships do their annual small-arms training. It is a hot and windy dent on the south coast of Cuba, toward the eastern end, where barren hills come down to water incredibly blue, and mirages flicker and dance across the rifle ranges so that your target, at five hundred yards, appears to be doing a shimmy over your sights. The Marines are always delighted, in their wrong-headed way, to get ashore on their own; besides, rifles are their mission in life, and a man gets five dollars

a month extra for expert rifleman qualification and three dollars for sharpshooter. The bluejackets fire also, and have inducements to excel, but they hate stretching their duck-legs on the beach, and they abhor standing in ranks with leggings on, and they despise rifles.

"Damn!" said the files in the first motor launch, shoving off. "'Member how proud Mike was to get ashore las' cruise? Up in the bow wit' the automatic rifles, he was."

The croakers of the guard harped on the theme. They were frank: Mike was the luck of the outfit; look at the weather we've had. An' how slow the new replacements are, snappin' into it—every one of them wit' two left feet. Not like last cruise. Gonna be some cruise, this is!

"Aw—knock it off!" growled the hard-headed lieutenant of Marines. "Murph and some of you crooks stole Mike year before last from Fish Point yonder—go steal his brother. And you will pipe down that croaking, or—"

But the guard was in no mood for dog-stealing. Another dog in Mike's place would be worse than no dog at all. Mike had come aboard a small and impudent puppy. He had taken amazingly to seagoing—more apt in learning, said his messmates, than the smartest Marine the Norfolk Sea School ever sent to salt-water. Knew all the drills, had his station, billet number, and rating. After that affair at Puerto Dios his proper seniors ele-



The Marines went off as soon as her boats were in the water.

vated him to the rank of sergeant, and he patrolled the streets of South American capitols in a tailored overcoat of fine blue cloth, adorned with brass buttons and collar ornaments and bearing sergeant's chevrons of golden silk. All this was set forth in his service record.

No other dog would live in Spartan simplicity on the gun-deck, scorning ward-room comforts and snubbing all officers save his own. No other dog would ever learn to present arms with the guard.

Even the captain said, when the first sergeant brought Mike's staff returns to be closed out for desertion: "No—we'll just carry him as a straggler. He'll join up again, maybe." And they missed him in the evenings, after chow, when the men sang in front of their tents, and the quick West Indian dark gathered, and the stars blazed blue-white in a velvet sky, brighter than the harbor-lights.

For the appointed time the cruiser's people toiled, burning to saddle color in the fierce West Indian sun, and firing prodigious amounts of .30-caliber ammunition. And the cruiser ran southwest across the Caribbean, coaled at Cristobal, visited briefly her base port on the Pacific side, and departed on affairs of state up the south coast of Central America, over a sea where a sleepy wind moves and the decks are wet always with warm rain, and water-spouts run restlessly to and fro between squalls.

Meantime, Mike lived in a flat up beyond the Bronx with the parents of the gunnery-sergeant, until that merry fellow should consider the winter sufficiently spent for Mike to stand the drafty temperatures of Quantico Barracks. For Mike was a warm-weather critter, born close under the line, and his friends feared pneumonia or something. Living so, he grew fat to a disgusting degree. Spoiled like a grandchild by two elderly people who had nobody else to play with, his figure lost its lean, efficient lines, and he came in from his turn around the block with his red tongue slavering out and his wind quite gone.

This was the only exercise he took. He had been accustomed to twenty-mile hikes over tropic trails, finishing strong on his own legs, unlike that fox-terrier of *U. S. S. Austin's* guard, who had to be toted after the third hour ashore. He had been wont to carry out all evolutions aboard ship at the double, as regulations provide; now he always waited at the foot of the stairs—it being a walk-up place—for transportation. Like many seafaring people who come ashore, he at once became soft and extremely lazy.

Such a life was pleasant in the winter-time. Snow was not in Mike's previous experience, and he hated it. His blanket-coat barely kept him warm, and his toes, spread by habit to grip a smooth deck, had a way of picking up slush that distressed him. It was infinitely more comfortable to doze in front of the fire, and partake languidly

of elegant rations, brought him on a plate. It is doubtful that, through cold February and March and the raw, wet April of the Bronx, he gave a thought to his ship-mates of the flag-ship guard.

May, after a brutal winter, was lovely in the North that year. To Mike, drowsing grossly over a terrific breakfast of pork-chops, before a dead fireplace one morning, came a breath of perfumed air, a hint of growing things. Something forgotten stirred in him; his nostrils twitched. He remembered the green that follows the first of the rains, and seas of turquoise-blue, and the white decks and the bright work in the tropic sun, and all the color and ardor of the southern seas. He remembered the guard, drawn up in starched khaki at the quarter for ceremonies, with parade polish on belts and rifles; and he saw himself, groomed until he was shining ebony, by the left guide.

He remembered runs ashore, over trails cool in the dawn, with the guard swinging at adventure behind him, and something interesting ahead. He remembered the fascinating alleys you poked into, and the odd folks you met, ashore with the beach-patrol. And he raised his head and felt again salt spray on a little dog's tongue, and the steady heave of the fo'c'sle when you put to sea; and he saw the rainbow that runs in the spray off the bow, when the wind is on the quarter and the bow wave breaks in foam. And he remembered his Marines, and he thought he would go and look for them.

Mike rose and yawned and stretched himself. The door was open, and he went below. On the street, he twisted his nose into the moist air and turned downtown, for spring comes up from the South. He had tremendous adventures at street crossings, and some brutal treatment at the hands of an elderly gentlewoman who was walking out with a little lady-dog of high degree; she—the elderly gentlewoman—smote him with an umbrella. In the afternoon, he found salt-water. He was all in when he found it, and his tail was dragging, for he was appallingly out of condition from his winter of soft living. He limped up the first gangway he came to and looked around hopefully. Remembered things had driven him all day; he noted sadly that there were no navy uniforms on deck, and he further observed that this was not, by navy standards, a clean ship. But he was very tired, and it was a ship, and that was what he wanted.

It was a busy ship; winches were squealing and cargo hoists clattering, and nobody paid him any attention. His stomach sounded a persistent mess-call, and his instincts took him to the crew's galley, forward. He entered this place with confidence—there was, in his experience, no unkindness; when a little dog was hungry between meals, they always found something for you in the galley. In a dark place full of smells he came upon a greasy cook, cutting up dubious meats and casting them into a pot. Mike loved meat. The man did not look; Mike nuzzled his calf. Then he stood on his hind legs and barked once,

politely, deferentially: "I say, Jack, how's it for a piece of chow?" And Alfred Tupper, fo'c's'le cook on *S. S. Benlothian*, whirled with a twitter, for the condition of his nerves was deplorable—that Yankee gin he'd been so incautious as to drink last evening, with certain American chaps.

He was not an attractive person, this Alfred Tupper. He was bottle-shouldered, with a pendulous stomach and a pasty face, and his long nose overhung a mean little mouth. For the rest, he was smothered in hair; an unpleasant mass of it grew to his eyes, and bristled in his ears, and showed startlingly black against the fish-belly white of his forearms. He was the sort of fellow who always has a woman or a dog attached somewhere for mistreatment—a woman usually, for dogs have a surer instinct about such things. Mike would have cut him dead anywhere else, not caring much for the run of sailors and civilians under the happiest circumstances; but just now he was hungry, and he was a dog of practical mind. He barked again, with a note of impatience. Manners are manners, but this egg had no call to stare at him so pop-eyed, like.

"Cripes," said Alfred Tupper, and worse than that.



Alfred Tupper.

"Strike me blind if it ain't a tike. Now, wot the bloody——"

His first idea was to kick the tike through the bulkhead; Mike was a small dog, and it looked safe. Then he noted that the tike stood on his hind legs with an air, a certainty, that denoted education. Alfred Tupper was a chap always on the make; he had known good things to come out of dogs before this. He gave Mike a piece of meat, and he took advantage of Mike's interest in this victual to make him fast to a stanchion. Then he appraised his capture.

No visible marks of ownership—Mike's neck had grown too fat ashore for the ornamental collar, suitably engraved with his name, rate, and ship, that the black gang had made for him, and a new one had not been supplied. Smart-lookin' tike, with a bright eye to him. Belonged to somebody, surely. Question was, would they come lookin' for him? In view of the fact that *S. S. Benlothian* was a mean ship, on the back side of an obscure dock, Alfred Tupper didn't think so. Sailing in an hour, anyhow. Just take him along; Alfred Tupper was for the moment without a pet. They presently dropped down East River with Mike still fast to the stanchion.

S. S. Benlothian was a ship of no special character. She carried the flag of a little house, on leisurely runs between Liverpool, New York, Havana, Panama, and Valparaiso, with intermediate stops. One degree above a tramp, she took freight and such passengers as were

not particular. What happened on her fo'c'sle was no concern of any person's, and being reasonably fond of dogs, I will not dwell upon it. Alfred Tupper, in the course of a misspent life, had served with an American



Mike was transformed into a wretched, cringing little brute.

dog and pony show, and he knew the mysteries of that trade.

He started out with the lavishing of a new collar on Mike, which was very fine to see, if you didn't know what the inside of the collar was like. Mike, even after he joined up with his own folks again, never carried his head quite the same. For Alfred Tupper took up his education in a serious way. There was nothing gentle about his methods, but they were effective. The first officer, who was a hard man, with no sweetness in him, observed them one afternoon on the well-deck forward,

and kicked Alfred into the runways by way of showing how he felt about it.

From a sleek, arrogant fellow, looking every man in the eye, Mike was transformed into a wretched, cringing little brute. All the curl went out of his tail, and the look of him was pitiful. But he knew what he must do when Alfred Tupper played "God Save the King" on a mouth-organ, and he knew how to sit up and ask for a drink, and jump through arms, held so, and balance Alfred's cap on his nose, and to die for his country, and a lot of other pretty capers. By the time *S. S. Benlothian* made Port Limon, Mike was a success in every cantina Alfred Tupper visited. A man may pick up a flock of free gin from the slightly boiled if he can inject some small entertainment, like a performing tike, into an evening, and Alfred considered that Mike was worth all the trouble he caused him.

S. S. Benlothian transited the Canal and ran down the Rainless Coast, following her occasions in and out of roadsteads like Mollendo and Arica and Iquique and Antofagasta, all the way to Valpo; and came back North again. She had much business, including coal, at Balboa, and she tied up to Pier 16, just inshore of the American squadron anchorage by the canal mouth. This day the flag-ship and a gunboat were riding to their buoys there, and *S. S. Benlothian* swung across them, dipping her red ensign to the Stars and Stripes.

Alfred Tupper, on the fo'c's'le, was giving Mike a bath

preparatory to a run ashore. He looked briefly at the gray ships and swore at Mike, who for some reason was all worked up. A bugle sounded on the flag-ship, and Mike barked furiously. This was insubordinate, and Alfred wrung his slim muzzle. Mike, with a flash of his old spirit, slashed savagely at his hand, and Alfred, inexpressibly shocked at such baseness, took steps. The bout ended with Mike properly subdued and half drowned. "Tike the bloody starch out uv any uv 'em if y' hold they heads under water a bit," observed Alfred genially, and he presently went ashore with Mike under his arm and laid a course for the flesh-pots of Panama.

He noted incuriously that Mike was restless and contrary beyond his wont, but he was not the sort of trainer who tries to figure what a dog is thinking about; he had never given a thought to Mike's background. As they passed, in a jitney, the landing at Pier 18, two motor launches full of sailors and Marines on liberty were standing in.

For the flag-ship's guard was going to have a party, with a month's pay in their pockets. It was a sort of an occasion; they had done a good job of work up the south coast of Central America, and they felt high. All hands except the guard of the day, from the top-sergeant down, were present. Even the junior music, miraculously unrestricted for misdemeanor, was along, and they all assembled at Billie Bean's place. Each man had chipped in according to his rank, and Billie Bean was furnishing

sandwiches and the use of the arbor back of his dance-hall, for he esteemed the guard. There was any amount of beer, and the ship's band had been invited, so that music would not lack; and the guard's favorite hospital corps man and the big ship's cook, who always went ashore with the Marines, were present.

In this squadron, they take the liquor question calmly. It is always available, and astonishingly little drinking is done, considering. Lots of files, these days, honestly prefer ice-cream. For the rest, they make it a point of honor to carry their drinks; a man who came back from the beach out of control would be effectively dealt with by his messmates, even if his officers failed to observe and take steps. And it was the pleasant custom of the guard to throw parties as a unit when suitable occasion offered.

Unofficially, and in cits, their officers might drop in during the evening, to hear a song and wish them well and see how things were going. Patrol officers were tranquil on party nights, because they knew where all the Marines were, and they knew that any possible disorder would be suppressed by particularly heavy-handed sergeants who were zealous not to abuse privileges. And the arbor behind Billie Bean's was, this night, a happy place.

It would be between nine and ten, with two hours of liberty yet to go, when Alfred Tupper and the melancholy Mike got down that far; they had started at the other end of town. Mike had been ugly all evening, and

both he and Alfred showed wear. Alfred had found it necessary to carry him; he wouldn't lead at all, in spite



He looked briefly at the gray ships and swore at Mike, who for some reason was all worked up.

of his collar. But this far, luck had been mighty kind to Alfred; in Panama, where Mike was known for two cruises, no person had recognized him. They raised the lights of Billie Bean's and paraded to the bar.

It was a good night at Billie Bean's. Besides the regular customers, a big English boat was in, carrying some hundreds of Irishry out to Australia, on a settlement scheme. The fo'c'sle of a Norwegian was present in a body, large, crop-headed fellows drinking *aquavit*. Most of the *Benlothians* were there, and other merchant chaps were represented. The front bar was rather crowded, and the dance-hall behind was paying for itself.

Alfred Tupper set Mike upon the bar and did something secret, and Mike got on his hindquarters and barked. "Hi, mite," said Alfred to the gentleman in the white jacket, heartily, "me little friend 'ere, 'e says 'e'll 'ave a spot o' Old Tom. An' a spot fer meself, eh? No fears bout tiltin' the bottle—right-o!" Alfred flung small coins on the bar and shot his slug down. "Ow, ye don't fancy yours, wot? No fear, I'll tike it—never waste good 'Ollands, wot?" And he wiped his mouth and began a long account of his little friend. "Mite, hit would bloody well hastound you, the store I set by that there tike. Like brothers, we are—like brothers. There's few tikes like him——"

"Where'd you get the mut?" cut in the bartender, with a narrowed eye; he was a busy man, but he stopped to listen.

"Mite, I'll tell you. Last run, there was a lidy—bleedin' lidy of quality, she was—Alfred Tupper nimes no nimes," began Alfred with a smirk, "on our little packet, an' she——"

"Huh!" said the bartender, and served a customer.

Mike, still erect, kept an uneasy eye on Alfred. From the arbor came a gust of song—a hundred men yearning thunderously for "Sweet Adeline." Mike rolled his eye that way and shivered violently . . . And a fellow lounged alongside and said:

"Man, it's a grand tike ye have, that same. Meself, I'm all for the beasts. Sittin' on his hunkers like that, would he be knowin' any tricks, now?"

Later Mike sat in the centre of a table, among beer-mugs, and wretchedly made sport. And two petty officers drinking near by said:

"Amoosin' mut, that. Kinder like the mut the Marines uster have, aboard—they lost him sommers. What was that mut's name, now?"

Private Jones was not one of the big men of the guard; when the guard formed for ceremonies, his squad was more than half-way down from the right, where the first squad ran six-feet-three or so. But what there was of him was very compactly put together. He had been out for air; the property-sergeant had said to him, like a father:

"Now, listen, Jones—you're gettin' tight. Now you just get outer here an' run around the block a couple times."

He was returning with his head cleared. He passed

the group at Mike's table—Mike had muffed one, and was being corrected—and he came to a full halt.

“Say, guy, where'd you get that dawg? I said, where'd you get 'im?”

Mike had been standing stiffly with Alfred's cap on his nose; now he whirled around. Alfred caught him a cuff and cursed. He told this sunburnt bloke in khaki where he could go, him an' his tight pants an' his tin-pot Vivy, too—blowin' in on a hartistic ak like this here.

“Lissen,” repeated Private Jones earnestly, overlooking personal insults, “that's our dawg. That's Mike. Of the Marine Guard, U. S. S.—”

Mike whined very pitifully and quivered; Alfred Tupper snatched at his collar and Jones saw.

The closest way to Alfred was across the table, and Jones took it. The table overturned, with other matters; Mike barked, one of the dance-girls screamed, and Alfred said nothing whatever, because Private Jones himself was using his windpipe. The jolly merchant seamen at the table picked up chairs and danced around the pair on the floor, watching for an opening; they didn't care about Alfred Tupper, but they resented militarism. Others jammed in, catching up chairs, bottles, steins, anything; especially the Irishry. They didn't know what it was all about, but they had hopes.

It was the narrow-eyed bartender who whispered to the bar-boy; that volatile Jamaican scuttled back to the arbor, and immediately thereafter a wave of Marines



Others jammed in on the pair, catching up chairs, bottles, steins, anything



rolled silently through the door at the flank of the long bar, and waded in. The fo'c'sle of the Norwegian finished their *aquavit* and rose to a man, baring huge freckled arms. People crowded in from the dance-hall; odds and ends from the harbor bore a hand, and the girls took refuge behind the bar, squealing.

In an instant, the place was a perfect hell; pacifists there present went away; *Rhon Istmeño* is no friend to peaceful folk. Bottles sung through the air; chairs and tables crashed into ruin; a stool flung by a huge Marine ripped down the array of bottles behind the bar, from an enfilading direction, smashed the big mirror, and caught Billy Bean, entering from the dance-hall to investigate, square on the bows. Billie Bean, a robust person, roared like a lion, caught up a bung-starter and came into action with complete impartiality.

The astute bartender, from under the bar, sent his Jamaica boy for the police, the naval patrol, and the Special Service Squadron, if the last happened to be available. All at once there were uniforms in the street doors; a lieutenant with a black arm-band blew piercingly on a whistle. And the gunnery-sergeant of the guard, who had climbed on the bar for observation, thought fast; he made a dive at the switch behind the bar and pulled the lighting. In the breath of comparative silence that followed the sudden dark, a great voice spoke:

“All right, M'rines—get clear—hold everything—patrol's aboard—back to the ship, all hands!”

There is nothing like military discipline, even in a bar-room row. When the furious Billie Bean found his lights



The girls took refuge behind the bar.

again, all the patrol officer netted were two or three Marines who had been engrossed in their work to such an extent that they had not heard their orders. The Marines stated that they had been attacked and were defending themselves; would the patrol officer please take

care of them? The Panama police made numerous captures, and the fine new bastille of Panama city was a populous place that night.

It is just a dash from Billie Bean's place to dry and orderly Balboa, as you go down to the docks. The first sergeant shepherded his men on the Balboa road, and squad leaders checked up.

"We'll just shove on back," said the first sergeant, nursing skinned knuckles. "Any casualties? And did anybody find out what it was about?"

"Word was passed some of these here merchant marines beatin' up a gyrene, all I heard."

"Well, it was a good scrap, anyway. Who was it, gettin' beat up—an' how come?"

"Damifino. Tell you what I did. 'You Scowegian bastard,' I says, an' wit' that I hit him."

"Say, one guy was all set to massage your dome wit' a table leg, an' I kicked the seat of his pants right up between his shoulders, I did. Say!"

"Jam like this, chair makes the best weapon in the worl'. Not too heavy, an' you hit a guy wit' a chair, you're bound to land somewhere—can't guard off a chair."

"Sargunt, sleeve's tore right out of my new blouse—English khaki—survey it for me, line of duty, will you?"

"Wait till skipper see's it—skipper'll be mad as ——."

"Aw, the skipper! First thing he'll say'll be, who licked——"

"Jus' the same, better get back an' tell the lootenant about it first, an' let him tell the skipper."

"Hi! Who's that there?"

Private Jones had withdrawn early, and with a reason. He stood up now under a street-light, where he had been effecting running repairs, and he yelled: "Gang—it's ole Mike! I got ole Mike back, right here—lookit! Know who had him? That Limey son of a ——."

The yell that followed brought all the motorcycle-cops in Balboa. And shortly thereafter the flag-ship guard went down the road in column of squads, closed up and keeping step under their non-commissioned officers, all present, including Sergeant Mike, and roaring out: "From the Halls of Montezuma":

"If the Army and the Navy
Ever win to Heaven's scenes,
They will find the streets are guarded
By United States Marines. . . ."

S. S. Benlothian entered the Canal on the first run next morning. The fo'c'sle-cook was in his galley, trying to carry on with two ruined deadlights and a throat that was almost ruined for practical purposes, besides other bruises and contusions of a painful nature. He had lost his dog, and his shore-going duds were fit only for brass rags. He is still wondering just what happened, and why, and he will always cherish a sense of injury against those bloody Yankee Marines, one of whom assaulted him, all



“Gang—it’s ole Mike!”

for nothink, mind you—just for nothink, the bleedin'—
He didn't notice, when *S. S. Benlothian* swung across



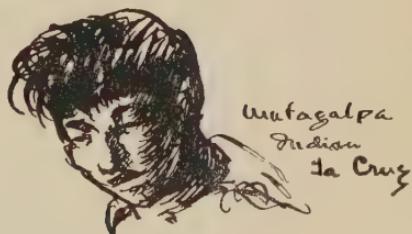
“If the Army and the Navy
Ever win to Heaven's scenes,
They will find the streets are guarded
By United States Marines . . .”

the flag-ship's bows, a little black dog among the people
on her fo'c'sle, trying hard to tell his folks how glad he
was to be back in his own place. . . .

A SOLDIER OF LIBERTY



Mosquito Indian
Wawa Boon



Miskito Indian
La Cruz

V

A SOLDIER OF LIBERTY

ITO DIAZ was a banana-cutter in the country behind Cape Gracias á Dios, on the Mosquito Coast. Like most of the people on that coast, he was a mixture of all the racial strains available. His mother had been a yellowish woman from somewhere near Rio Grande, and his father was most likely a Mosquito Gulf Indian, for Tito had the typical build of those hardy boatmen—a bullet head set into great square shoulders, a chest like a barrel, long arms, a thick, long body, and sturdy legs.

Tito could not read or write, and had never wanted to. He had never had on a pair of shoes, or travelled more than fifty miles from the place where he was born. When he grew large enough to swing a machete, his mother told him to go with God, great stomach that he was, and not to come back any more, eating everything on the place, name of ten thousand blessed virgins! She pointed her remarks with a large stick, and Tito went away. He went up the nearest river to the nearest banana plantation, and an uncritical *contratista* took him on as a cutter, at about one-tenth the usual wage.

At the age of twenty, Tito could clear his quarter-

hectaro of bananas in a day, drink as much of the fiery *casusa* on feast-days as the next man, and hold his own in the savage fights that always terminated such functions. *Casusa* is native rum, distilled for occasions by the *mozos*, and taken in quantities as soon as it is cool enough to swallow; then the celebrants carve each other up with machetes. Otherwise, Tito grew into a grave, even-tempered *mozo*, with nothing against any person and no thought beyond breakfast to-morrow. The year of the Sarmiento Revolution found him working for the third season in the cuttings of the *contratista* Coto Fernandez by the Mawa River, that runs down to Puerto Cabesa, where the fruit-boats come.

This Coto Fernandez was a superior man. His left hand was off at the wrist—Coto means “lamed”—since the day that a coral-snake struck him as he reached for a stem of bananas, in a *seccion* more than half an hour’s trot from the camp. There are many of these little red-and-black-banded devils among the bananas, and every camp keeps approved remedies for their bite; but you must get your treatment very quickly after being bitten—you should have it in seconds, for the best results. Ten minutes is too long to wait; you die, inside half an hour, most unpleasantly.

Coto Fernandez considered these things briefly while the color and the shape of his hand altered under his eyes; then he laid that hand across a log and cut it off at the wrist with one blow of his heavy machete. He

daubed a handful of black mud on the spouting stump, tied it up with strips from his trousers, and walked composedly to the camp. From the company hospital the tale spread, and they made Coto Fernandez a *capitaz*, a foreman; and then, because his head worked as dependably under routine conditions as it did in emergencies, he became a *contratista* himself, with a cutting of a hundred *hectaros* in his charge.

Coto Fernandez's camp was on the high northern bank of the river, where a little creek came in. The company erected for him a long shed, with a splendid roof of corrugated iron, and a small room partitioned off at one end. In this room Coto Fernandez lived with his woman, and the *mozos* slung their hammocks outside, down the length of the shed. The woman cooked for all hands—from fifteen to twenty men—and presented the *contratista* with babies at regular intervals. Such unions are the custom of the country, and are usually permanent; sooner or later, in a prosperous season, Coto Fernandez would take his family down to the priest at Puerto Cabesa, and the *padre* would marry the couple and baptize all the children. It was here, observing the elegance and order of the Fernandez establishment, that Tito first felt the stirrings of ambition.

Forethought, in a native of the banana-lands, where there is no stress of climate and sustaining food can be plucked from the trees twelve months out of twelve, is rare enough to set a man apart. Your *mozo's* earthly

possessions are seldom more than the shirt and trousers he wears, and his machete. These he can move without undue exertion, and he drifts up and down the country, along the rivers, as inconsequentially as the monkeys and the parrots move. A hand who will stay in one place for more than two seasons is sure of preferment.

Tito noted the esteem in which the American manager held Coto Fernandez when his little power-boat dropped in from time to time on inspections, and Tito saw himself, first, a *capitaz*, and then a *contratista*, the friend of *gringo* managers, with a house and a woman of his own. And especially Tito saw Rosalita, who was Coto Fernandez's oldest girl, budded all at once from a brat into a slim, gold-tinted woman, with her dark crinkly hair gathered low on her nape, and her dark eyes that gave Tito odd sensations in the pit of his stomach. Certainly he was going to stay.

There was on the cutting of Coto Fernandez another man who saw eye to eye with Tito in this matter of staying—the tall black *capitaz*, Juan. After working together for three seasons, they made together the discovery that Rosalita was growing up and worthy of a man's time. Soon after that, Tito found a coral-snake in his hammock; but Tito moved faster than most men. Again, his hammock-lashings broke under him one night, and he very nearly impaled himself on a razor-sharp machete, propped cunningly—extremely odd that new grass-lashings should unravel so—odd about the machete, too . . .



Budded all at once from a brat into a slim gold-tinted woman.

Tito thought it over, saying nothing. But Holy Week, when no man works, followed after that, and on the last day of the *fiesta* Tito and Juan settled the affair between themselves, with their machetes, in the swamp on the creek that came down through the *bananals*.

When their argument was finished, black Juan's slashed chest ceased to heave, after some minutes; and he lay in an unsightly huddle among the stained and trampled grasses of the swamp. Tito wiped the blood out of his eyes and was aware that Rosalita stood at his shoulder, panting a little, as if she had been running.

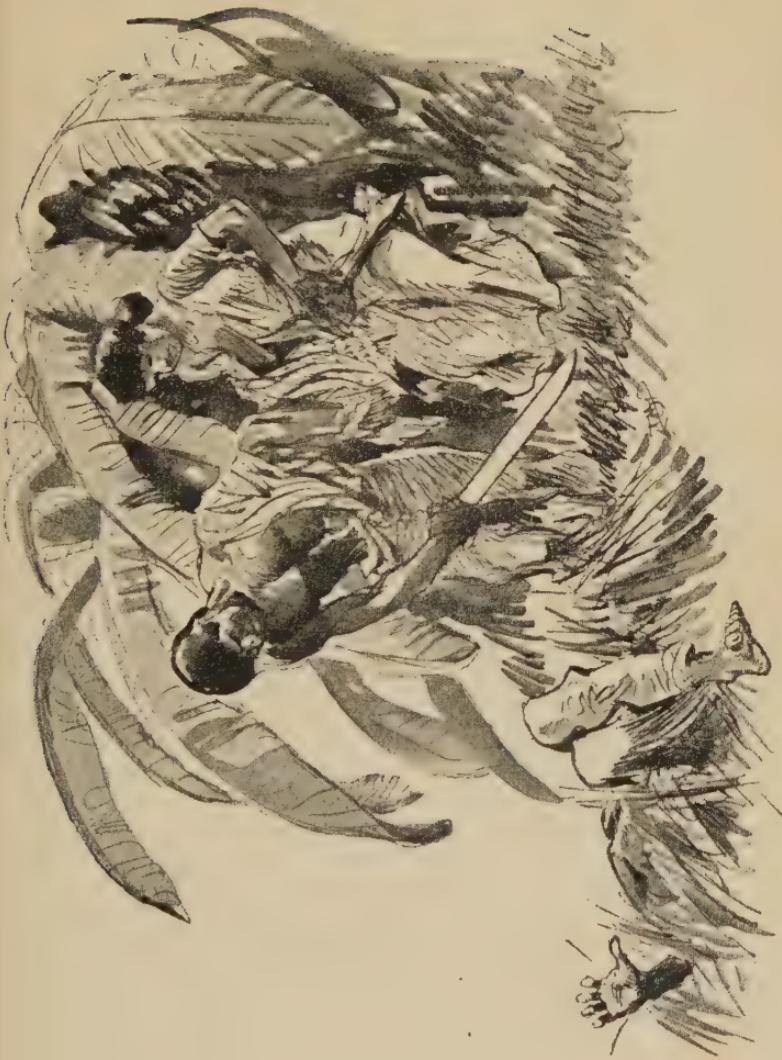
“*Ayi—pobrecito!*” she said presently, and devised something for Juan's last effort, which was a gash that ran from Tito's hair to the angle of the jaw, deep as the bone. And it was she, a practical person, who indicated with a little gesture the long blunt head of an alligator, risen without a ripple in the creek below them. “*Caiman*,” she breathed. Together they heaved at the heavy carrion of the late *capitaz* and with much effort, because Tito was dizzy and weak, they slid it into the dark water for *caiman*, who tells no tales on any man . . .

The pair of them turned up at Coto Fernandez's cutting three days later, making no remarks. Rosalita's mother, fat and shrill, found much to say. But Coto Fernandez said that the little one was old enough to set up for herself, and Tito was a steady fellow, as these *mozos* went. He added that Tito might as well be *capitaz* until black Juan returned from wherever he had gone—the rascal,

notoriously addicted to drink, was doubtless sleeping it off in a *calabozo* somewhere.

He looked at Tito's gashed head, and he decided, privately, that it would be a long time before Juan came back. But he asked no questions, for he was a sensible man. Instead, he helped Tito to set up a little thatched shack on the river bank, and showed him how to make a luxurious bedstead of straight springy poles and woven strips of cane. And Tito settled down to be a solid citizen.

The months slid past like driftwood on the river. Young parrots that were in the egg when Tito and Rosalita confided black Juan to *caiman*, up the creek, were now strong on the wing, and exercised with their screaming elders of evenings over the stream, when the *mozos* came in from the cuttings and waited for the rice to boil. There was an even chance that Rosalita's baby would be a boy, and Tito was increasingly pleased with himself. He was, he considered, fortunate beyond all *mozos*: this Rosalita was a superior woman, with spirit in her. Already she was wanting a pair of shoes from the Chinaman's store down the river, and she kept after him about going to the priest—they could do that when the big rains started, and a man might spare the time. Indeed, the chances are that she would have driven Tito Diaz up in the world; their children might have gone shod and read newspapers. And meantime, in the north, the President-General Sarmiento, exiled for cause by his political



When their argument was finished, black Juan's slashed chest ceased to heave.

opponents in the capitol across the mountains, took refuge in a neighboring republic, and fomented war.

A revolution in the banana-countries is a curious weaving. In the background there are large business interests that want something and are willing to pay for it. There must be a conspicuous man with a grievance, whose name is a rallying-point for all the little *politicos* without government jobs. There may be a few patriots. To these come a drift of restless chaps, out-at-elbows fishers in troubled waters; and there is added a sprinkling of plain fools with illusions about adventure.

Arms and ammunition sift in from unknown sources; rifles of honest arsenals—St. Étienne, Spandau, Remington—are broken out of packing-cases stencilled “farming implements.” Field guns with worn rifling and rusty training-gear, that perhaps fired their last rounds across the wooded reaches of the Argonne, are set up under palm-trees. It remains only to recruit the rank and file, the common soldiers. One simply goes out and gets them; but since they are deplorably intent on their own small affairs, and quite indifferent to governments, recruiting-officers have to be persuasive.

About sundown one evening, the Sarmiento War involved Tito.

A river tug came noisily down-stream, towing a barge; instead of yellow-green banana-stems it carried armed men, who landed from it. Simultaneously, armed men approached the camp along the trails that led through

the banana *secciones*. Coto Fernandez, his *capitaz* and all his *mozos* were assembled. A fat man who wore khaki breeches and a large pistol mounted on a box and made oration.

He said he was a colonel, and he read from a paper how the President-General Eustacio Leopoldo Sarmiento B., in exile on a foreign strand, had heard with bleeding heart the outcries of his unhappy people, ground beneath the wicked heels of those vipers and wolves of the Federal Faction.

The President-General was not so base as to sit at ease while the fatherland perished. In swift response to the piteous appeals of his people, whom he regarded as his very children, he was returning. Let traitors tremble! Let the tyrant and the oppressor crawl into holes and pull the holes after them! Armies, patriot armies, avenging armies, would spring from earth in arms where he, Sarmiento, trod! The valiant manhood of such a nation would never endure slavery: he, Sarmiento, would lead them up out of bondage. The miserable minions of the unspeakable Federals would flee at the sight of his patriot legions, armed with right and justice. A few victories, and the soldiers of liberty would return to their homes, loaded with gold and honors, to relate to their admiring families the glories of their achievements, and to rejoice in freedom and prosperity evermore! And a great deal further to the same effect.

All of this meant absolutely nothing to Tito. He re-



He indicated that they were to get aboard the barge—quick.

garded himself as very well-off where he was. He had never heard of Sarmiento, and nobody was oppressing him, that he knew of. He wasn't mad at the Federal Faction, whatever that might be. Furthermore, he had few enough men—couldn't spare any of them, with the bananas ripening faster than usual, and the rains starting so early. Being *capitaz*, he said as much.

The colonel told him that it made no difference. He and his *mozos* could volunteer for service with the so-glorious soldiers of liberty like patriots, or they would be shot—he really didn't have time to hang anybody. He indicated that they were to get aboard the barge—quick! He himself relieved Tito of his long machete. That one-handed fellow was no good—but all the rest—old Pepe, who was gray-bearded, and young Pancho, who was hardly as long as a rifle—aboard the barge, you!

Rosalita's mother set up a very great outcry, but Rosalita was silent. Only, she took the thin silver *escudita* of her name-saint from her neck and hung it around Tito's brown throat . . . Her eyes were big with fear and pain: women have perhaps an instinct . . . Tito whispered to her, "*Oja, Chica*—never mind. I will get away from these fools when they stop—I will be back in the morning, and we will hide until this foolishness is finished." But she covered her mouth with her *rebosa*. One prodded him with a bayonet, and another put the butt of a rifle in the small of his back and pushed; they were fifty men with guns, and Tito went with his *mozos* aboard the barge.

The wails of Rosalita's mother followed them down the darkening river.

The barge did not tie up for the night; it kept right on, and one might not drop overboard and swim, for there were alligators. In the morning they passed into the lagoon below, and in the heat of the day they landed on an island off the mainland, where there were several hundred frowzy fellows and a miscellaneous collection of boats. An important yellow negro wrote their names in a book, and one thrust a rifle into Tito's hand and ordered him to come and learn to shoot. With others he lay on his stomach in the sand and fired ten rounds at the ribs of an old wreck off the beach, having been taught how to cram a clip of cartridges into the magazine, and how to work the bolt of the clumsy, fool-proof Russian rifle.

Broad red ribbons were distributed; you wore them as hatbands, for they were the color of the Sarmiento party, and also its uniform. One gathered that the Federals wore blue. The noise of the shooting pleased Tito, and red was a color he admired. But they gave you the slimmest ration of rice and plantains, which the men boiled over little driftwood fires, and Tito thought sadly of Rosalita's cooking-pots, and he thought of Rosalita, and Rosalita's small lemon-tinted heels pattering on the hard dirt floor under his thatch, and he thought of his banana cuttings, overripe, and he felt very low inside.

The more he saw of this affair, the less he liked it. All foolishness, especially the drill—making a hundred men

stand in a line, and face this way and that way for an angry little man who never seemed to want the same thing two minutes at a time! Further, they batted you about with the flat of a machete.



The more he saw of this affair, the less he liked it.

Tito was resolved to run away at the first opportunity. Some dark night he would get a boat, and once on the mainland, he could slip out of sight like a parrot in a mango-tree! He would take Rosalita and live in the bush until this madness was finished. So he thought, fingering Rosalita's thin silver medallion . . .

His comrades in arms, most of whom were present under the same circumstances as he was, felt much the

same way about it; but more came in every day, for Sarmiento was doing well along the coast. Two things held them together: the boats were guarded by sharp, tough *bravos* from the coast towns, and the water was populous with large brown sharks.

Weeks of monotonous wretchedness went by; then, in a day, the army was embarked on all the boats and barges available—river tugs, borrowed from the fruit companies, auxiliary schooners, coast-trade vessels with rusty plates, sailing-boats, anything—and they went for a day and a night to the southward.

This distressed Tito, for he now had no idea where he was, and it would be a long trail back to Rosalita. They steered in to a straight white beach, backed by a line of jungle, out of which a few tall palms lifted. A mile or so south, down the beach, the land raised into a rough, wooded hill, with water on three sides of it. One said that the Federal Armies had taken refuge on this hill; presently Sarmiento would fight them there and end the war! The name of the place was so-and-so—it was strange to Tito, and he promptly forgot it. He could see, even at a distance, that bananas would not do well on such soil, and there would be no mahogany, either.

But this day Tito's company had scant time to look around; they were put to work unloading the boats and carrying all sorts of stores—ammunition, sacks of rice and beans, stems of plantains—across the beach to the shelter of the bushes.



Small boats full of Marines came from the North American cruiser.



They got a field-gun ashore, and they sweated under an enormous crate which contained a light tractor, impressed from the wharves of the very fruit company that Tito worked for—he recognized the sign of the company. Under the direction of an Englishman who said he knew about such things, Sarmiento's people had built a framework on this tractor, and housed it with plates of iron. Inside, a machine gun was mounted. They had also a drunken American beach-comber who said he could run it, and a German who claimed to be a machine-gunner; and Sarmiento expected great things of his tank.

When they had it safe ashore, the Britisher, the American, and the German got very drunk by way of celebrating, and remained that way as long as their liquor lasted, which was a week. During this week, the Sarmiento army marked time, for they counted heavily on the tank in their attack, and nobody else could make it go.

It was a very dull week for Tito. The Federals on the hill did a little firing, and the *Sarmientistas* fired a great deal from the beach, but it was long-range shooting, and few were hit. When merchant-steamers came in from sea and anchored off the hill, out of range, Sarmiento sent out tugs with armed men to search the steamers, on the chance of picking up something; but small boats full of Marines came from the North American cruiser that was lying off there, and kept them from taking any of the elegant things that were said to be on those steamers.

Tito, whose company was detailed for several of these trips, had hoped to find something for Rosalita in this way—a new *rebosa*, maybe, or a pair of shoes; she had always wanted a pair of shoes—and he felt resentful against the North Americans. About this time the last of the tank-crew's Scotch was finished, and they became sober, and were angry enough for any kind of fighting.

One morning Tito's company was awakened early. Their officers came among them, kicking and striking with the flats of their machetes. Up you come, you *perezosos*! Shake a hoof, you cat-whiskered *cabrones*! Attention, you! Get in line, you! It appeared that they were going to have this fight. Tito was very glad. He hoped that the fight would settle it so that he could go back where he came from, and he would have seen something of the world, too. He listened attentively to what the officer was saying.

The cowardly Federals have strung barbed wire across the beach, in front of the hill. The tank—that turtle-looking thing yonder, cares nothing for barbed wire—it is to go right through; then the company is to run through behind it, and all the rascals on the hill will be driven into the sea. That is not all! The big tug out there has two hundred men aboard her, and guns like a *gringo* cruiser! She will start at the same time, and while the foolish Federals are watching the tank, those brave fellows will land from the tug on the seaward face of the hill, and catch them in the seat of the pants! Here is a

bandoleer of ammunition for every man, and over under that palm is a big drink of rum for all—a double drink!

Offshore, they heard the tug getting under way. The tank made a terrific noise inside itself and lurched off down the beach. Its crew had already drawn their rum ration.

With the fiery native stuff burning their bellies, Tito's company started bravely enough. They strung out behind the tank in an irregular column. Behind them,



In the brush somewhere, the field gun began to shoot.

other companies straggled from the brush and formed. And in the brush somewhere, the field gun began to shoot. Seaward, the tug began to shoot. These made very noble noises, and Tito felt pleasantly excited. A fine tale to tell old Coto Fernandez . . . and the son Rosalita expected . . . maybe . . . The people on the hill did no firing; perhaps they had run away. The light grew over the sea on your left hand as you went along; when the tank came to the barbed wire, it was nearly sunup.

The tank tore through this wire, dragging the posts right out of the sand. The German inside loosed off with

his machine gun. Tito, close beside the tank, saw sharp little flashes, like fireflies, break out across the face of the



Tito's company started bravely enough.

hill two hundred yards away. Then the air was full of swift things that whined and hissed; slugs clanged against the iron plates and ricocheted away in every direction; bullets ripped into the sand, and men were hit. The tank went on, and the men following crowded as close as they could, and fired their rifles into the air, yelling.

Then the tank stalled in deep sand, and presently the engine stopped inside. It was so close to the hill now that the Federals could fire at it from each flank, and they laid a Lewis gun on the squirming mass of men behind it. A bullet glanced through the machine-gun port and flicked out the German's brains, so that the

machine gun did not fire any more. The Englishman and the American climbed out of the thing—it was entered from the back—kicked their way clear, and ran at the hill, shooting their pistols. They did not run far.

Meantime Tito, without any clear idea of what was happening, had clung like a cat to the rear of the tank. He had dropped his rifle. He was dislodged by the rush of the two furious *gringos*, and he rolled over in the sand.



They laid a Lewis gun on the squirming mass of men behind it.

He saw that nearly every man was down; there was much blood and a great outcry. His hand touched a fallen machete—that was something he understood—now he could give those scoundrels yonder a pill!

He got to his feet and gathered himself. Something struck into the base of his strong brown throat, and he wavered on his legs. It clutched at his windpipe; he couldn't breathe. The sand came up and hit him in

the face; he turned over, stiffly, clawing at his neck, and he went down into the dark . . .

Next day the Federals sent out a burial party, at the direction of the North American Admiral, who didn't want to shift his anchorage when the wind blew offshore. The Federal officer in charge of the detail prodded around for any effects of value, as was his right. He took a little thin medallion from the neck of one body, and was interested to note that the bullet which killed the fellow had gone squarely through the centre of his poor *escudita*. The silver was too light to be worth anything, but he considered that it would make a nice keepsake . . .



THE MARINES HAVE LANDED





VI

THE MARINES HAVE LANDED

SERGEANT HOUSTON chased the gun-striker away from Number 8 five-inch and set up his shaving things in the strong light that fell on the breech. This was contrary to law and custom and it seared the feelings of Private First-Class Tompion, to whom Number 8 gun was all the world; but just now the cruiser was in the yard for her annual overhaul, and things were a little relaxed. Further, as Sergeant Houston pointed out, he was a senior non-commissioned officer and rated consideration; the Exec. and the Captain of Marines were on leave, and the lieutenant had gone ashore, and nobody was apt to come sticking his bill into a fellow's personal affairs this time of the evening. It was the best place to shave on the gun-deck, and all gun-strikers and such seagoing chambermaids could go—Sergeant Houston said just where they could go. Private First-Class Tompion retired, desolated, and the sergeant smeared lather on his brown jowls, singing right tunefully "The Rolling River."

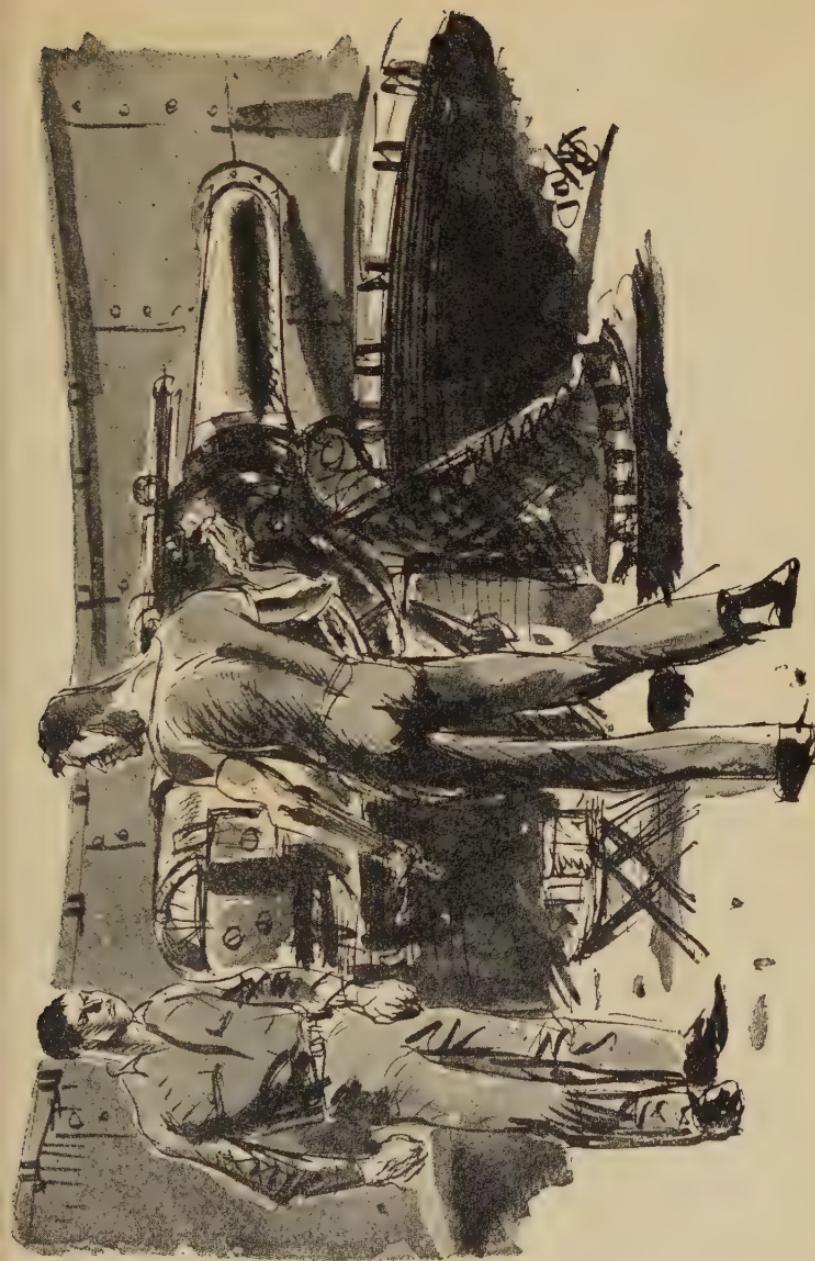
"And then she had a nigger baby—
Hi! Ho! The rolling river. . . . "

he sang, and his friend and companion-at-arms, Sergeant Hook, entered the gun-compartment.

"Ho!" said Sergeant Hook, and checked things off precisely. "Th' lad is policin' hisself. Number one shoes—shore-goin'. Liberty blues all correct, with medals an' badges. Had the blouse neatly pressed, as the skipper says, I see. An' my Lord, a white shirt an' collar! Drawin' careful deductions from intelligence reports as assembled, like the skipper says in his little talks on the art of war at N. C. O. school—must be a woman somewhere."

"Corporal Sanders had a date to-night, but he figured his duty wrong, an' he's on guard of the day. Asked th' lootenant if he could get off, but th' lootenant musta been out late last night. So he turned the date over to me, feelin' that the corps must be well represented at all times. We fall in wit' each other corner of Fulton Street an' Willoughby, just abaft cigar-store. At seven bells. There ain't but one. Sanders says he's never met her, but he knows her girl friend and she says she's something very swell. Give me her descriptive list: built like a light cruiser; uniform, one of these short fur coats. Knows where to go. An' a blonde. It oughta be good. I like 'em blonde," Sergeant Houston concluded, slicking his black hair. "Somehow I always fall hardest for blondes," he added thoughtfully. "Dark girl's good for steady company, but a blonde——"

"Yeh," said Sergeant Hook, "an' you'll wake up at turn-to some mornin' an' find yourself all signed up for



Sergeant Houston chased the gun-striker away from Number 8 five-inch and set up his shaving things.

the long hitch with one of them. You stand by till I shift. I'll just see you under way."

He was tall and beautifully set up, was Sergeant Hook, and his mind functioned along strictly military lines. He was not interested in any other lines. Women struck him dumb; he put in most of his time ashore in keeping away from them. He was one of the seagoing type of Marines, who go to a ship as privates and stay aboard for whole enlistments, venturing on the beach for refreshment and recreation only. Houston was a short, dark Scot, with a golden voice which *cantineros* in the far corners of the Caribbean will tell you about, and a roving eye and a honeyed tongue that kept his life full of interesting episodes. There was that case of the girl in Chile, which drew the august attention of the admiral, even. The two of them were much together; nothing ever came between them but women.

They stood presently on the corner of Fulton and Wiloughby, just abaft the cigar-store—two elegant Marines, filling to the eye in their long gray-green coats and shining belts, with a length of sky-blue trouser and the red stripe showing, and their caps tilted just a grain to the left, at the devilish angle the flag-ship's guard affect. Women turned to look.

Sergeant Hook offered solemn warnings, for his friend was dear to him . . . "Now, listen—you remember that time in Callao—I told you—" and Sergeant Houston regarded appreciatively the night-life of the district. And

a creature in a coney coat came mincing around the corner on spurious silken legs. She powdered her nose in the light of the cigar-display and came alongside.

"Oh," she said, speaking exactly into the air between the two Marines, "is this Sargunt Houston? Mr. Sanders—he's the grandest fella—just gave me a ring——"

Her voice was the kind that makes a sensitive ear vibrate like a fiddle-string, and Sergeant Houston had a sensitive ear. He thought fast.

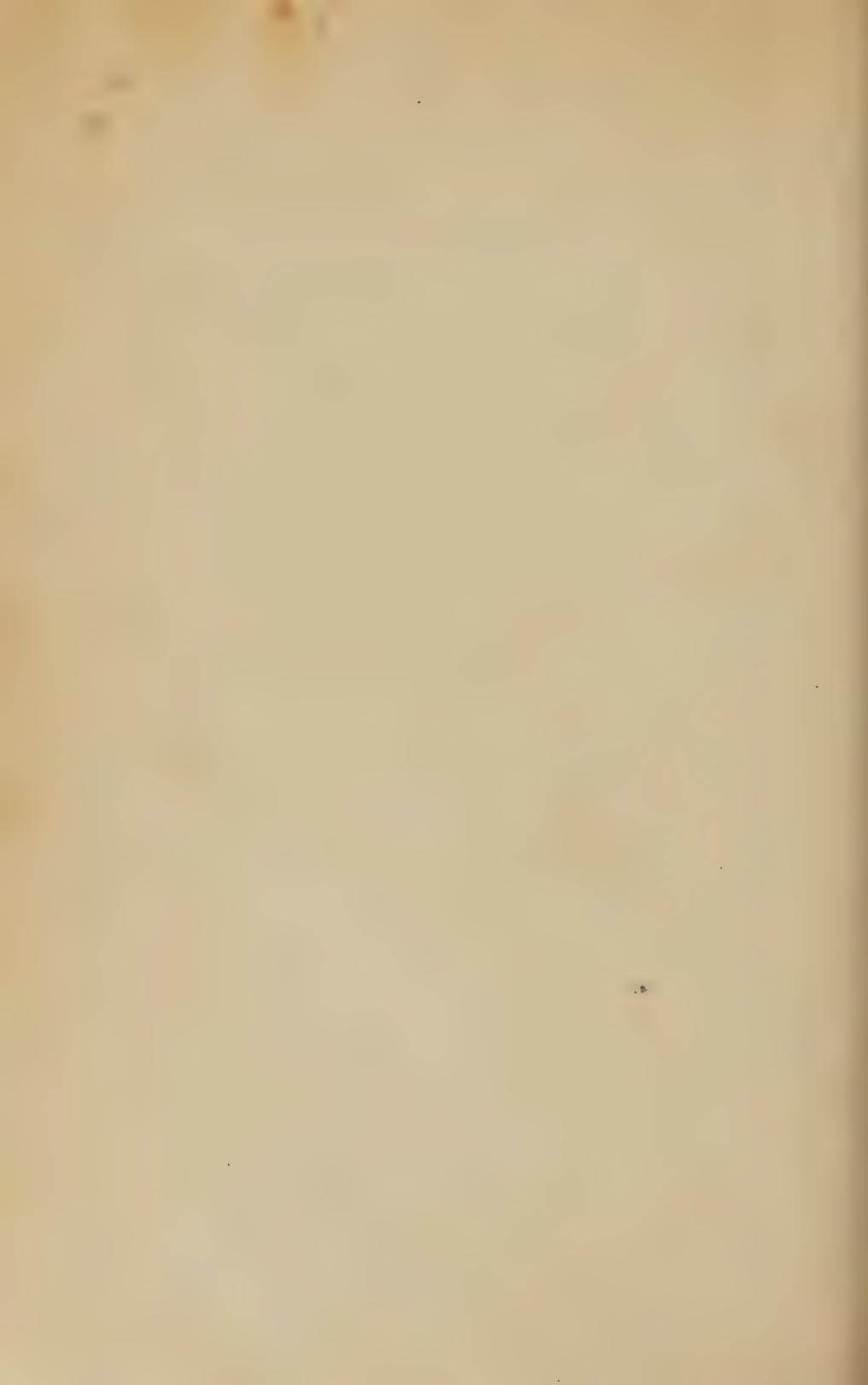
"No, madam," he said. "It's old Houston right there—pleastomeetcha—so long," and he went away from there into the night as a destroyer dives into a smoke-screen, before the stricken Hook could utter a word.

It may be added that when Corporal Sanders, pleasantly tired from military vigils on the quarter-deck, came below to turn in, something terrible happened to him; but that has nothing to do with this. Sergeant Hook, somewhat in a daze, was moved off in close convoy.

The lady held his arm, and confessed that she just loved Marines. They were all such grand fellas. Knew how to give a girl a good time, they did. Never rowed over a check, the way some fellas do, or got fresh like sailors. A fella had to know her before he got fresh. "You know what I mean. I mean to say, if a girl wants a good time, she's gotta stand for a certain amount of it, if you know what I mean. And I always say I've gotta know a fella before he can get fresh with me—you can't be too careful, what I mean. And sailors wear funny pants."



"Oh," she said . . . "is this Sargunt Houston?"



The sergeant held no brief for gobs. But after all, the navy is the navy, and he cleared his throat raspingly. "Well, now, ma'am, look here——"

"Oh, Mr. Houston, nobody ever heard me say the navy wasn't all right. I just love the navy-uniform. There's some grand fellas in the navy. I know the grandest fella on the *Arky*. What I mean is, their clothes are kinda funny. Say, there's a grand place right around here. Swell music, and you tell the waiter whether you want Scotch or rye, but the gin is terrible. You know what I mean. I mean to say, it's a swell floor, and—right in here."

An elevated train thundered like a sixteen-inch shell overhead, and there was a dim door in a dark place, flanked by bleared windows that carried words in tarnished gold, forgotten words, half-obliterated. The sergeant made out "Schlitz . . ." A man with a face like a buzzard leaned by the door and spat; they went in. You passed through a bare and dingy room, long and narrow, with a bar out of the old-time. The brass rail that ran along its foot distressed the sergeant; his people aboard ship kept the wardroom country, and he regarded bright work as important.

Behind the bar a weasel-headed yellowish man in a dirty white coat gave the couple a very hard eye, and wrenched the cap from a near-beer bottle for a customer who snuggled against the bar and looked depressed. The girl's face came under the light, and the functionary's

shoulders relaxed. He grunted, and they went through a door and down a black hall to a place where lights shone redly through a haze of cigarette smoke, and a nasal piano yielded lamentably to the assaults of a mulatto in a derby. A few couples revolved, much entwined; one pair was doing the Charleston with abandon. Others sat at little tables registering nothing in particular. The girl nodded here and there and found a table in a corner.

Sergeant Hook sat down and was not amused. A devil of a place! He thought regretfully of Billie Bean's, and all the places in the tropics where whites and tans and yellows were merry, in dance dumps and cantinas where the sea-winds came, and great bright stars burned like lamps in a sky of black velvet. And he thought very fiercely of Sergeant Houston.

A fat waiter breathed on his neck and remarked: "Quiet night, Gert: Major, what'll it be?"

"Me and my boy friend will take Scotch; and bring a bottle of ginger ale, and don't be laying any of that embalming-fluid off on me—I know you."

Sergeant Hook smelled doubtfully of some amber stuff in a glass; it gagged you just to smell it. Gert ignored the ginger ale. She lifted her glass, knocked it against his and shot it down her throat like a sergeant-major.

"For the luva Mike! Whatse idear? Ain't you——"

"Regards!" said the sergeant, holding his breath and gulping . . . A V. B. rifle-grenade, detonated under your breast-bone, would feel about like that.



"I mean to say, if a girl wants a good time, she's gotta stand for a certain amount of it, if you know what I mean."

Gert sipped ginger ale composedly: "Some of my girl friends take water or ginger ale and all in theirs, but I take mine straight. I'm just that kind of a girl. The others get kidded something terrible. What I say is, give it to me straight. It ain't bad here. Our gang hangs out here regular. One of the fellas did go blind or something after a party one night, but he never got his hootch here. The poor oil-can got it from a bootlegger in the Black Belt. What I say is, lay offa bootleggers. Say! that's grand music."

There was nothing in the sergeant's training that told him how to break off an action. He rose, feeling for the floor with his feet, and sweated profusely. Girls were not his job. He considered ways of killing Sergeant Houston: there was that execution they told you about on the China Station—the Death of a Hundred Cuts—man would know he was dying. He held Gert like you hold a powder-bag after a misfire—firmly, but trusting that nothing unfortunate will occur. She nestled under his chin and yelped at him.

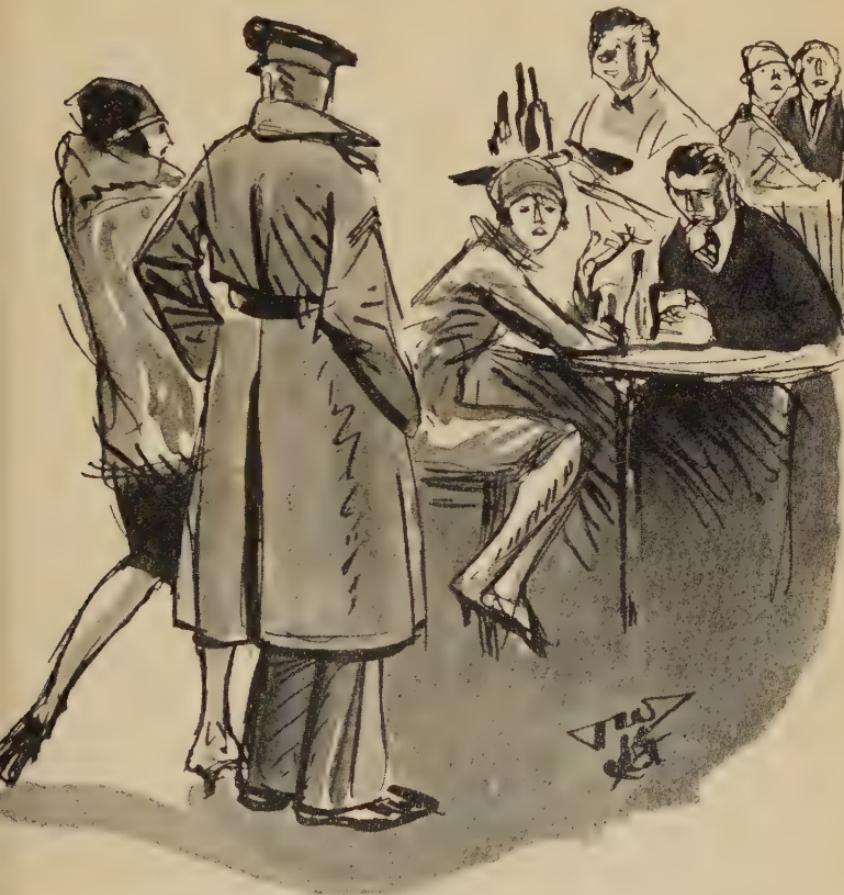
"Come on, Mr. Houston—hold me tighter—atta-baby! Say—you gotta grand build for dancing. I like my boy friends tall—you know what I mean—a real man. No—you doing fine. I'll show you a new step—like this, see? You'll get it—navy-men are always such grand dancers—I mean, Marines."

The disturbance at the piano ended with a crash. The waiter did business. Gert clattered her glass and recalled

a grand fella in the Scouting Fleet, one of these fellas always putting out a line, so you thought you'd die right along. The other night, before the fleet left, he'd say, "Even an angel can't fly with one wing!" And then he'd say, "You know, three is a lucky number." Sergeant Hook disbursed the price of a tailor-made dress cap and noted that after the first one they went down easier. The piano came into action again, like field-artillery galloping over a metalled road, and you danced . . . Air was like the berth-deck compartments in a western ocean gale, with everything battened down for three days. Sergeant Hook stepped hard on several sets of feet and was cheered a little. Gert decided that the place was getting crowded for good dancing; knew another place that oughta be getting good about now; they went there.

They went to several places of the same pattern. Very late, they came to one in all respects like the first, only a little deeper, darker, and more cramped. The sergeant, his head cleared somewhat by the air, sized it up as they went in, the way old Haitian campaigners do in a strange room. Piano on the left as you enter; light switch just past the piano. One door; one bleared window with slats across it, shut very tight. Some couples sat around morosely, and a fat girl slumped over a table and giggled at nothing apparent. Gert stimulated herself, and the sergeant said "Regards!" feeling rather numb inside. Gert policed her nose and looked around; she languished against the sergeant's chevrons and whispered:

"Don't look around, for the luva Mike, but there's Nick Larahan behind you, and Dago Dimmy." Her



The girl nodded here and there and found a table in a corner.

voice conveyed that this was big news, as one would say, "There is the admiral of the navies."

"Who," said Sergeant Hook, stretching his neck, "is this Nick Larahan?"

A thick-shouldered fellow with close, pale eyes sat hunched at a table out of line with the door. He had a gray face and his nose had been broken and cast some points to the right. Beside him was a round little Italian with remarkably quick, bright eyes; their heads were close together and each spoke soundlessly out of the corner of his mouth. Now they broke off and stared at the sergeant, whose voice had a way of carrying. The piano stopped; there was a certain tension in the air. The Italian put on a look of whimsical amusement; the other looked ugly.

He pushed back his chair. "I'll learn that bozo——"

The Italian remonstrated, with a sort of humorous deference: "Aw, now, Nick—aw, Nick, those navy-guys—remember——"

The big man settled back with a growl, and Sergeant Hook felt the short hairs on his neck tingle; he didn't like that fellow.

Gert, much shaken, dragged him to his feet and buzzed furiously at his ear as he fell into step with the piano. "You are a sap! Nick Larahan, he's croaked more guys than any guy between here and Albany! The bulls never got a thing on him—all the mobs is rounded up but his—he packs two rods, and Dago Dimmy, he's his body-guard, like. Don't start nothing with that baby. You made him mad, talking out like that! We'll just dance this and catch a quick drink, maybe, and slide. I know a place——"

"You always know a place," said Sergeant Hook, feeling the deck under him for the first time that night. "I like this place. That last drink, it tasted less like the



Some couples sat around morosely.

stuff we put in recoil cylinders than most. An' I would see more of this bird."

Sergeant Hook was a well-conducted man and abhorred the idea of casual brawls, as do all well-conducted men; his chevrons and his station were a pride to him, but he had had a very unhappy evening and his judgment was clouded by prohibition Scotch. He hoofed it now with zest, and carromed into people. Gert was unable to find any words, and he loved that . . . They sat down, panting a little, and a fellow in a plaid cap stood in the door,

both hands in his overcoat pockets, and exhaled cigarette smoke.

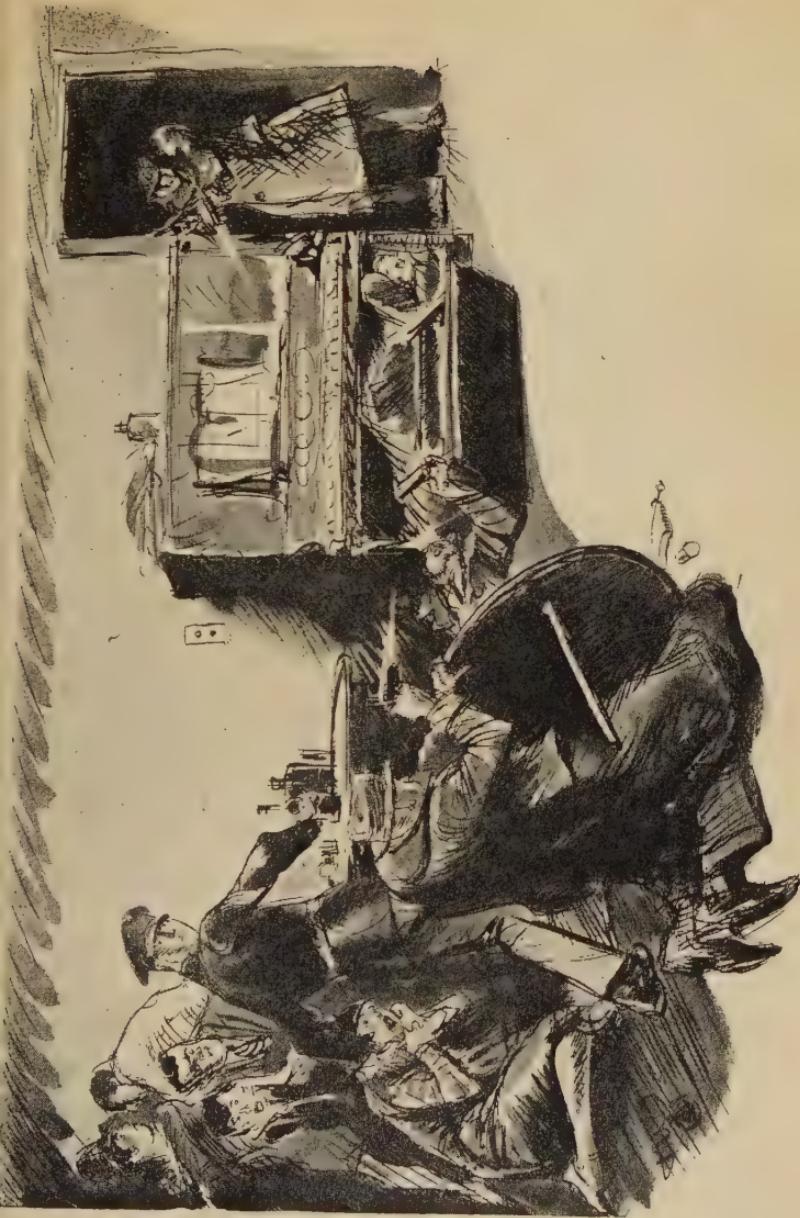
"Lord," breathed Gert, "it's Charley, and he's all hopped up—"

The little Italian darted down the wall toward the piano, the operator whereof was under the piano's overhang. Sergeant Hook, with the instinct of a man trained to ordered violence, observed, "Pulling the lighting—" Nick Larahan, his eyes narrowed to slits, overturned his table and wrenched at his hip. "Totin' gats in a hip-pocket, under a coat," noted the sergeant sadly. "This is your New York gunman, hey."

The man in the door had a gun in each hand, and one went off, very loud. The round little Italian barged into the piano; his hand, stabbing at the switch, missed; he bounced off the piano and sprawled on his back, his face still whimsically humorous, with wide-open eyes. The bird under the piano howled. Two bullets spattered into the wall behind Larahan.

"Rotten shootin'—that wop was inside of ten feet—he can't hit this guy across the room!" With a long arm, the sergeant swept Gert to the floor behind him, and made himself small. Larahan had his gun out at last, a service automatic. But his eyes flickered sideways, and the sergeant saw. "Damn! Bird may side-slip this way. Won't do—line of fire."

A bottle was at his hand; he measured the distance and threw it. Larahan got it over the ear and his gun



“Damn! Bird may side-slip this way. Won’t do—line of fire.”



clattered at the sergeant's feet, going off as it struck the floor. The sergeant reached for it. "Stop this—women around; somebody's goin' to get hurt," and a slug went through his sleeve. The individual in the plaid cap was emptying his weapons, regardless. "The devil," said the sergeant, "my number one liberty blues!" In one swift motion he caught up the pistol and shot the fellow through the point of the shoulder. A service .45 knocks a man down, anywhere it hits him. This chap subsided against the wall, cursing remarkably in a level, toneless voice.

"Oh, hush up, you!" said the sergeant, and kicked his guns away, and noted that the room was clear. Broken window; slats gone; the man under the piano stared pop-eyed and sobbed. Gert cowered in a corner, showing plainly two sets of garters; all the dancers, and the waiter, were not.

People crowded in; policemen, chaps in plain clothes. A man in a derby said to Sergeant Hook, "I'll just take the gat, and what's the big idear?"

Gert was now all over the sergeant, telling the world that he was her hero. "Little row; stopped it," he explained, not being a wordy man, ever. He fought Gert off. His mouth was full of hair.

A tall patrolman had out the piano fellow, and shook evidence from him.

"Charley, there, just blows in and starts shooting. This wop went to douse the glims and he bumps him off. Nick, he——"

"Nick is snapping out of it; just slip the bracelets on him. Murphy, give th' ambulance a ring. And the wagon. Shut up, Charley, you ain't dead—yet. All right, professor——"

"Nick, his rod looks like it hangs on him. This Marine fella beans him and wings Charley. That's all I know." He added that he was full of virtues and did not fear.

Larahan sat up. "Yous ain't got a thing on me—see? I'm sittin' here, see—and that snowbird——"

"Wait ta minute, wait ta minute," drawled the man in the derby gratingly. "The word's been out for you since last night. The Old Man wants to talk to you." "Aw—I wasn't nowheres near Pell Street last night. I was——"

"Yeh, Pell Street," cut in the derby. "That's it. Musta been a mean sock on the bean you got, Nick. Le's go. "Come on, sergeant, you're all right. We'll just tell the Old Man about it. You on a ship? I know a lot of the boys at the barracks."

They went out into a cold and empty street, Gert frozen onto the sergeant's arm. A petty officer of the Naval Shore Patrol was passing; he looked and did not ask questions. But Sergeant Hook was not surprised to see his lieutenant when, after waiting here and there, everybody was herded into a bare room where a big man sat at a desk. His lieutenant had a talent for being at places.

The big man heard it all, especially Gert. Gert talked.

She talked until it was positively indicated to her that she had said a mouthful. She concluded with the assertion that she was a true woman, not like some of these,



Gert cowered in a corner, showing plainly two sets of garters.

you know, girls, and Mr. Houston was her mate; she would stick by him forever. That was when Sergeant Hook, for the first time in his life, laid hands on an officer. He grabbed his lieutenant's arm and whispered frantically, with cold sweat on his face.

“Yeh?” grinned the lieutenant, and spoke confidentially to the high place.

“It’s all right, lieutenant. Your man here just got in on a private row between our friend Charley, who has the regrettable habit of taking heroin, and Nick Laranhan, alias several other things, and wanted very badly indeed. The Italian was Nick’s henchman, as they say. He’s just as well off where he is. I gather that your sergeant considered it ought to be stopped, and—well, the Marines landed and had the situation well in hand when we got there. We can let—oh, of course!” And then, very loud and stern, into the stricken face of Gert, “Sergeant, I order you confined without bail.”

“Eeeeeek!” began Gert.

“Silence! Young woman, you go nome!”

The lieutenant caught her arm. “Come on. Get you a taxi.”

She wanted to say good-by to her hero; she expressed a desire to share his detention, but the lieutenant was stronger than she was, and she left.

“Later, all smoking cigars, they said to the sergeant: “You can go. Ain’t there reveille or something? Sure, she’s gone.”

“Well, say, can’t you let me out of the back door, like? There’s no tellin’—she might be waitin’—an’ God have mercy on old Houston, for I won’t.”

ONE RAZOR-STROP—SIXTY-FIVE
CENTS



VII

ONE RAZOR-STROP—SIXTY-FIVE CENTS

SPEAKING of life and death and why men do what they do," said the sun-dried Captain of Marines, on sick-leave from the tropic station, "I'll tell you a story.

"There was a fellow named John Paul Jones, who came to my company from the States on the first draft last year. He was starting his second hitch, and he was a clean, well-drilled bird, very good-lookin'. A fine soldier; knew his stuff: N. C. O. material. I liked him. Sent him up to Cieba, where my *teniente*, Slossen, had an outpost platoon. Our outpost chaps are hand-picked, you know.

"He was up there quite some months—country was quiet—I forget how long. In those days they didn't have radios and movies and such, on outpost, the way they have now. It was right dull, especially when the natives were behavin'; but most men stood it. This Jones came down to Santa Cruz del Sur, which was my headquarters—and also the colonel's—and the place we had our rifle-range—for his annual target-practice. Outposts send in

one or two men at a time—they shoot for record and go back. Get extra money for qualification. The day this Jones went back a mail-boat was in, and we gave him the mail for his detachment.

“Private Jones—I had it in my mind to make him a corporal—fact, I was sending a chit to Slossen to prepare him for examination—stole a razor-strop out of that mail. Razor-strop worth sixty-five cents. Razor-strop belonged to one of his bunkies, who’d written to the States for it. Don’t know why Jones stole it. Saw the package in the mail and just took it. A few days later, the bird it belonged to saw Jones using it and put in a claim. Went to Slossen, he did, and accused Jones of stealing his razor-strop.

“Now, Lieutenant Slossen was a careful chap—didn’t want to do anybody an injustice—and he had Jones up to explain. Jones says it’s his strop. Said he bought it while on range detail in Santa Cruz del Sur; said where he bought it, and how many pesos he paid for it. The other fellow was equally sure it was his, and showed a letter from his folks sayin’ it was being sent. Both being men of good repute, as they say, Slossen couldn’t get any satisfaction out of it. So he turned over to his sergeant and came, twelve hours on horseback down to Santa Cruz, to see if Jones’s story about buying it was true.

“While Slossen was gone, Jones stole the lieutenant’s personal gat—little .38 automatic—and all the ammuni-



"The gunnery-sergeant is a cagy bird."

tion Slosson had for it. He stole a .45-calibre service automatic from the property-sergeant, with several hundred rounds of ammunition and some spare clips. He stole a fast little dun stallion that belonged to a thrifty hospital corps man in the detachment, and a new saddle from somebody else, and fixed himself up generally. Then he took to the hills. Stealin' from the inside is mighty rare in the service, thank the Lord, and we get out of the habit of watching for it, which is why Jones got away so easy, I reckon. When Slosson got back, sadly convinced that Jones was a thief, and all set to lock him up awaitin' a court, John Paul Jones was nobody knew where.

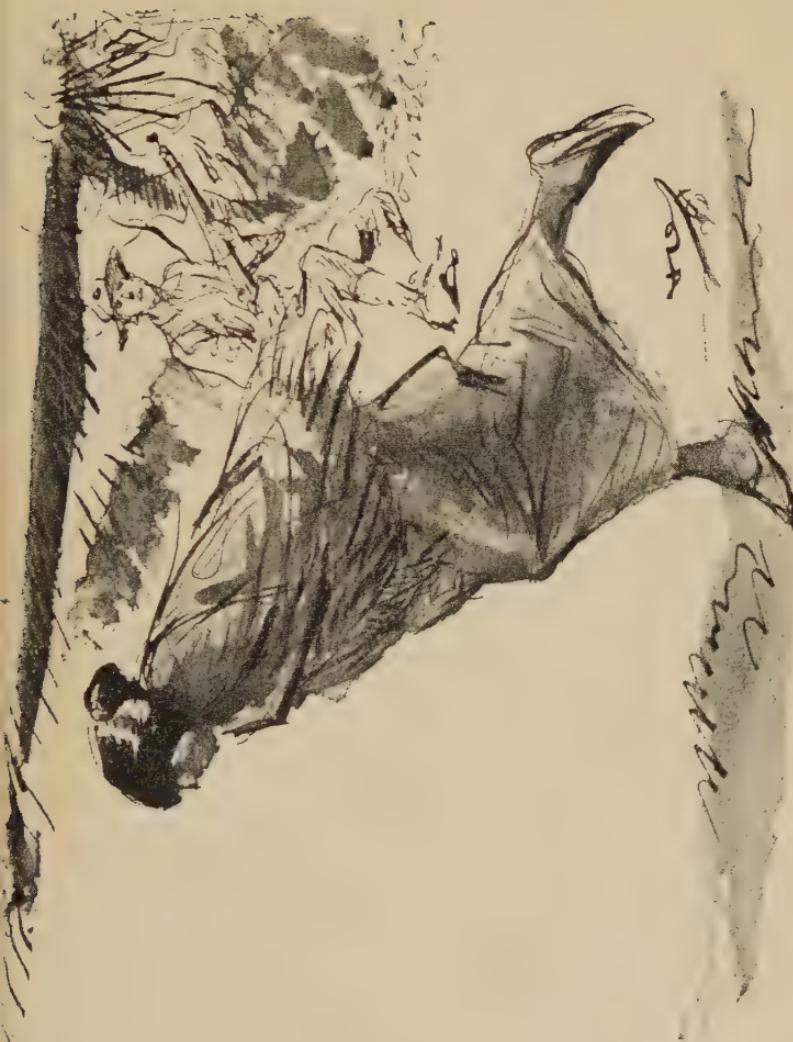
“A few days later, a *colona* from the hills—Spanish immigrant named Luis—came in and gave information that a *soldado* from Cieba had kicked him off his little place and taken his wife. His wife was a pretty Andalusian woman—pretty as they go down there. All sorts of changes occur to your ideas of beauty if you stay too long in those countries. She was rather pretty, though—I’d seen her. Luis said this *soldado* was there like he was going to stay, and were the Americanos goin’ to take steps? Luis was right mad about it.

“Slosson took steps *muy pronto*. He sent a squint-eyed gunnery-sergeant named Mahan and three privates to get John Paul Jones. The gunnery-sergeant, riding hard, came on the place late the next afternoon. (Palm-thatch shack, you know, in a little clearin’.) Mahan rode up to the edge of the cover, and hollered to Jones that he

knew he was inside—little dun stallion was grazin' staked out—and he'd better come and be put under arrest.

"John Paul Jones, inside, yells back that if they wanted him they could come in and get him. He then came into action with both pistols, killing the sergeant's horse. I'm sure he meant to get the sergeant, because he wasn't a good enough shot to swank around with an automatic at a hundred yards. The gunnery-sergeant is a cagy bird; he stayed in cover, disposin' his men so as to command all approaches, and waited for dark. Fired a few shots through the roof, just to show he was there. Besides, he had the woman on his mind. Some time later, Jones, who is keepin' up some small shooting, sings out: 'Hold it a minute, will you, sergeant, and let this kid come out!' And the Andalusian woman comes out and scuttles off in the brush, makin' no remarks, so Mahan said. After that, Mahan fires a few rounds through the shack, just to keep Jones amused, and Jones replies briskly until it got dark. Mahan well and truly reported the number of rounds fired by all, verifying same from the empty brass, when he got back. I forgot how many.

"When it was dark enough, Mahan's merry men closed accordin' to plan and rushed the shack. Two went in through what windows there were, and one through the door. They each fired one shot. Jones got one through the head, one through the lungs, and one in his stomach. And that was the end of John Paul Jones. They brought the remains in across a horse.



"The Andalusian woman . . . scuttles off."

"The board of senior and expensive line and staff officers who investigated the case found nothing whatever, except that death occurred not in the line of duty . . ."

"Well," I said, after waiting sufficiently, "what's the answer?"

"I don't know," the captain replied crossly. "Perhaps there isn't any."



KUPID'S KONFIDENTIAL KLUB



VIII

KUPID'S KONFIDENTIAL KLUB

REVEILLE bit into the darkness. The tents stirred uneasily. Marines and sailors of the flag-ship's landing force, camped ashore at Guantánamo for target-practice, reached for things under their field-cots, grunting and swearing in the dark; a few men lighted, behind tent-flaps, forbidden candles—issued, these, for the sole and holy purpose of blackening rifle-sights. There were confused small noises that shaded into a general clinking of mess-pans.

The east grew pale, and the great morning star of the Cuban winter, that had been golden, now blazed silver before the sun. The Marine officer raised himself on his elbow and saw that the tents made a black serrated line against the sky, and the hills to the east, beyond the rifle-ranges, were smoky purple with brittle edges. Chow line was forming on the galley. The bluejackets, all in white, showed up solidly; you could see only the white undershirts of the Marines, for their khaki trousers and sunburnt hides were still the color of the dusk.

The line was punctuated with glowing cigarette-ends; men sucked hungrily at the day's first smoke.

"Come on, Bozo—gimme a drag at that butt—left mine in my bunk."

"Yeah, you did! Lay offa Bozo, you low moocher—I got seconds on that butt myself."

From the anchorage off Deer Point, all the ships struck two bells—five o'clock. They were not together. The line commented:

"Funny, how you hear things over water. That's a light cruiser, that—kinder high."

"Yeh. And listen—that's a destroyer's bell; shrill-like."

"Very plain, though. Those destroyers is way up near the coaling-station."

"Hi! there's ole Rocky's bell—last one, as usual—quartermaster's sho' hard to rouse."

Across the tent, the Marine officer's lieutenant slept profoundly. The Marine officer settled back himself and felt hazily for the threads of the desirable dream that reveille cut into; bugles before sunup are hard on dreams. Then his trumpeter blew two long wails—bumps, that says five minutes to mess-gear. The Marine officer heaved out of his blankets and regarded his boots morosely.

"This settin' an example to the troops is the devil of a nuisance, so early in the mornin'."

He threw his boots at his junior, with effect. The lieutenant's feet hit the deck.

"Soupy, soupy, soupy, and not a single bean," sang the bugle, obscenely cheerful. The chow line passed into

the galley, and there arose a pleasant clatter of eating-tools, where the men squatted in the growing light over corn-bill hash and coffee. Presently the officers were growling over theirs. Being officers, they had a table



The Bluejackets.

and a bench, and a sad-eyed Filipino boy to explain that the eggs were bad.

Outside, the camp filled canteens and pulled rags through its rifles, and made all things ready for the day's shooting. The bluejackets were working with rifles and Lewis guns, and the Marines were doing postgraduate courses in automatic weapons—light and heavy Brownings. And the gunnery-sergeant of Marines entered formally with his daily ammunition report.

"Sir," said the gunnery-sergeant, saluting, "small-arms ammunition on hand, fifteen thousand rounds of .30-calibre and two thousand seven hundred rounds of .45. Small-arms ammunition expended to date"—he consulted his memorandum—"two hundred thousand eight hundred thirty rounds, sir. Marines firing all automatic rifles and two machine guns on D-range, as ordered. First Platoon on the firing-line; Second Platoon detailed to butts."

"All right, gunnery-sergeant; thank you. I want twenty men to coach the bluejackets on A-range. Pick 'em out, ten from each platoon. And"—for the Marine officer is also range-officer, in charge of all instruction in small arms and supplies for the same—"better make out a requisition for some more .30-calibre—say, fifteen thousand. Send it off on the eleven o'clock boat."

"Aye, aye, sir!" The gunnery-sergeant saluted and went out, smartly.

"Hear that?" the Marine officer added thoughtfully. "Over two hundred thousand rounds. An' we've fired over five hundred men—about forty per cent of them never had a rifle in their hands before, I'd say. An' we haven't had a single accidental discharge, or a casualty of any kind."

"That's right, sir. Now that destroyer gang on C yesterday, with just fifty men ashore, got a fellow shot."

Police call went, and sailors and Marines spread over

the camp area, intent on trash. Others swept the company streets with brooms.

"There's your boy friend, Will," said the junior ensign, meanly, to the Lieutenant of Marines—"there, cruisin' around the galley."

You saw an odd-looking little Marine, deplorably unmilitary. His nose was the biggest part of his face. His shoulders slanted back and his stomach curved out, and he walked with a twist to the left.

"Recruitin' officer that picked that fish will undoubtedly go to everlastin' hell," observed the Marine officer.

"How'd they ever saw him off on you, cap'n—you fellows always swankin' around about having the best-lookin' guard in the navy, an' all that," said the senior naval officer wickedly.

"Well, I have only myself to blame. Had a man go sick the day we shoved off from the yard. Called the barracks to arrange about his transfer ashore. Sergeant-major—you know that sergeant-major—great glad-hander—said didn't I want a man in his place? Said they had a fine man available; wanted to keep him, only he was due for sea service. Havin' my mind on certain domestic matters and a new consignment of trench-mortar ammunition and so forth, I said sure—I always take what's offered. But he came aboard when I was down in the forward hold, checkin', and I didn't see him until we were outside. I was very mad. I gave him to Will, here.

"He's been a great grief to his non-coms. Had to use sand and canvas to get him clean. An' he annoyed all hands by bein' seasick in the hammock-nettings. But he's comin' out. Been five years in the service, and committed no offenses—not vicious, just a bum—spent most of his time bein' transferred. You know—the kind of a man that a commanding officer sees and says: 'Good Lord! Put him on the first draft out.' I don't think he's had a chance, ever. We'll make something out of him yet—only, he does walk with a list to port."

"Well," pointed out the lieutenant, "he looks nice an' clean this morning. Washed his shirt an' everything. And got a hair-cut. I told him yesterday that we were raisin' no Sutherland Sisters or Circassian Belles in this outfit. You know, he's in Bogart's squad—the runts; broke their hearts when I put him with them. Said he spoiled the looks of their squad. And they've raised Cain with him, until he's snappin' out of it. See him coalin' ship the other day? He worked harder'n anybody—though I did holler my head off at him several times for gettin' in the way of those coal-bags—once I was sure a coal-bag was goin' to plaster him all over the side, but somebody jerked him clear. He used to be dumb and dirty; now he's just dumb, an' he's respondin' to treatment—I'm gettin' to like him."

"No, it isn't bad to have one blank file in an outfit—like that bird the chief keeps up, in the black gang. You know; a man looks at him and feels better about him—



Quinton 26

Followed by the firing parties singing, "Oh, I wouldn't get fresh, so she made me walk home."

self right away. Sort of a horrible example—good for morale."

"He is easier to look at," noted the Marine officer. "Credit to you, to make a soldier out of an egg like that. It's very encouragin'—I must make him my compliments," and he lounged out. "Oh, Kemper—here a minute."

Private Kemper wheeled, saluted and came to attention, even making an effort to bring his stomach to the perpendicular.

"Son, you look very smart this mornin'. Hair-cut an' shave are vastly improvin' to you. Keep it up. You want to be a credit to us, you know."

"Aye, aye, sir. Privut Kemper aims to, sir," and Private Kemper, dismissed, trotted off happily.

The sun came up over Cuba, and at once it was hot, and the shadows were hard and blue. Assembly went, and the butts details shoved off without rifles, followed by the firing-parties, singing, "Oh, I wouldn't get fresh, so she made me walk home," and presently the steady crackle of Springfields and the drumming of automatic-fire told that all ranges were at work.

The range-officer goes where he may be needed. He proceeded, as duty bound, to A, where the bluejackets were shooting at the twenty-inch bull's-eye. They fire on that target at all ranges, and this morning they were hitting it with gratifying frequency. All well here; the

range-officer observed details and came away to spend the morning with his Marines.

He found them, with the lieutenant, finishing up the first range, and getting ready to move back to 300. The automatic-rifle men and their carriers were strolling down by twos, arguing about bursts and the best way to hold a Browning to the target when you want to deliver rapid fire. The machine guns, each in charge of a sergeant, with its selected crew, were coming back also.

They fired from the right of the line, with a long interval between them and everything else; one can't be too careful with machine guns.

"Going good, sir," reported the lieutenant. "Only, that number two gun is giving trouble—I think it's the ammunition, because we put all new parts in the firing-mechanism last night. She jams and sticks on every string. Only got off one good burst. I put the gunnery-sergeant on her himself."

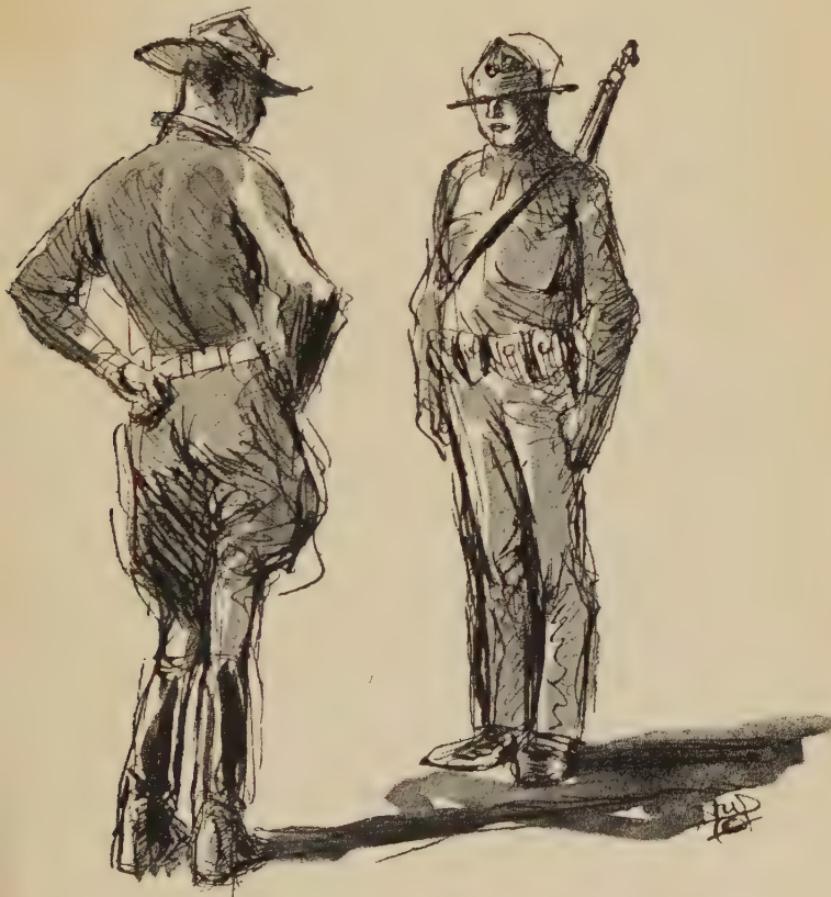
"We'll look it over, at 300. Say! Is that Kemper of that crew there? That——"

"Oh, no, sir—we just let him carry the water-tank; he's strong an' willing. He's ambitious, all at once; said he'd like to learn. But he has special orders about keeping clear."

The two walked back with the machine-gun people.

They reached the firing-point and stood by the Marine at the field-telephone, who was connecting up with the butts. The man made fast his gadgets, twirled the

bell-handle and began to call: "Butts! Hello, butts! Firing-line—firing-line—" Behind them, number two



"Son, you look very smart this mornin'. Keep it up."

gun, a man to each leg of its tripod came into position. The cover which controls the firing-mechanism was raised and the belt disengaged, as safety orders direct. The

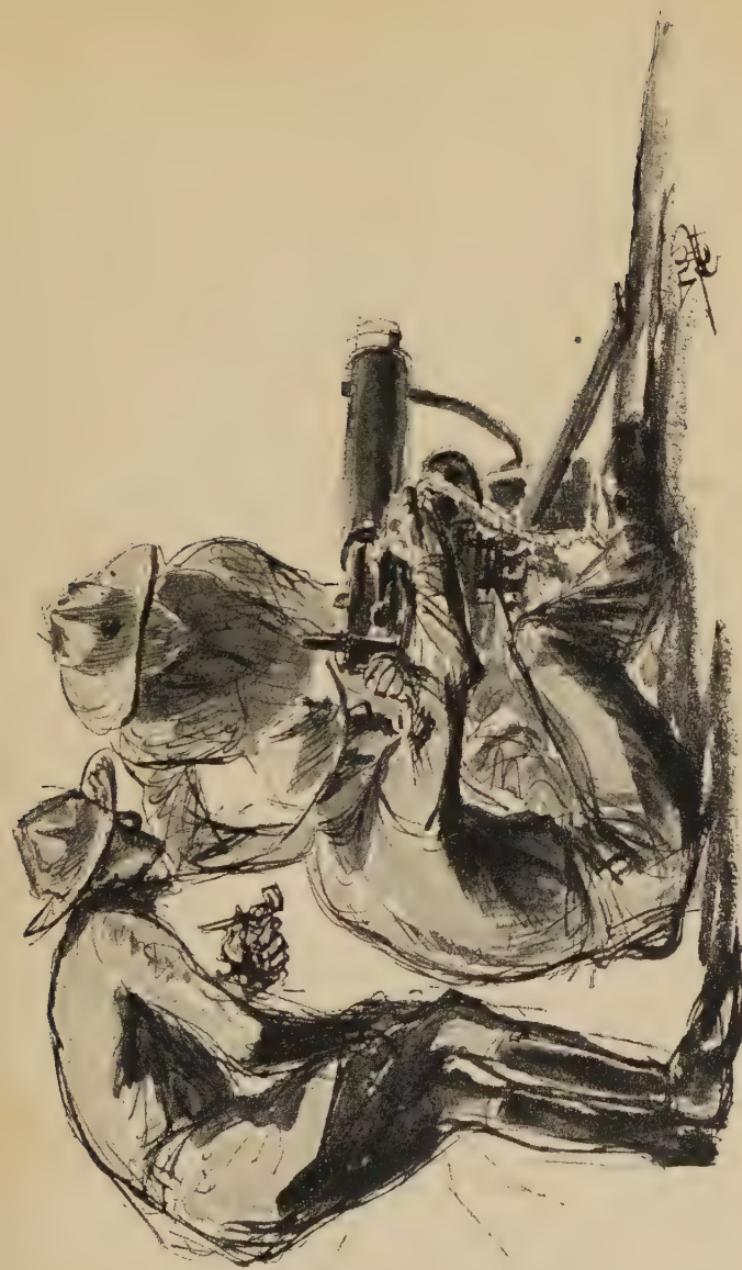
muzzle was toward the butts, and depressed. The crew halted, except Private Kemper, coming up with the water-tank.

They set the gun down, the man on the right leg of the tripod keeping hold, while a sergeant adjusted the other legs. Private Kemper placed the water-tank against the left leg and turned around. The man on the right leg lowered it, perhaps with a jar. At that instant Private Kemper, in the hesitating manner which characterized him, started to walk across its front. Now, like one obedient to some subtle and appointed prompting, he halted before the blunt muzzle, turned and stopped—nobody ever knew why. No person was touching the gun—the last man, on the right leg, had turned away as he set it down.

The raised cover-plate fell with a sharp little sound. The bolt handle snicked forward with a sharp little sound. The gun fired, one shot. Private Kemper swayed, tried to steady himself, and the gunnery-sergeant jumped six feet and caught him in time to ease him to the ground. His left arm trailed, and his left leg was bent disturbingly and unusually backward.

Men crowded there. The lieutenant dived at him and cut his trouser-leg away. A tall private emptied a bando-leer to make a tourniquet, and they yelled for the Navy Hospital-corps man detailed to that range.

The range-officer ordered: "Van, call the range-sergeant's office. Five rings. Get an ambulance. Mitchell



“That number two gun is giving trouble.”



—Corporal Greiser—take the other phone and cut in on the station-line at that post, there—tell the hospital. You birds—get to your places! Keep away from here."

He stood over the group by number two gun and saw that everything was being done that could be done. A long bright run of blood led out over the iron-hard ground, but while he looked, it stopped increasing. A tourniquet—two tourniquets—did the business.

"Hit him in the elbow, and drove his elbow right down through his thigh." He looked at the gray face of Private Kemper and compressed his lips. Then he turned quickly to the gun and examined it. First: one cartridge, lying under the gun, still warm. He picked it up, noting that it was split at the mouth. Belt was not engaged; that was correct. "Gunnery-sergeant: did you personally unload this gun?"

"Yes, sir. Disengaged the belt, drew the bolt handle back several times, raised the cover, and reported unloaded to the lieutenant, sir."

"Nobody was on it just now?"

"No, sir. Nobody was touchin' it. I was standin' here, gettin' ready to squat in position. Private Crawford was the last man; he'd set down the leg of the tripod an' turned away. Cover fell, and the piece fired."

"That ought not to fire it. Letting the bolt forward, if you don't touch the trigger, ought not to fire it—we'll see. Here's the ambulance."

The ambulance roared alongside, and halted. When

they lifted the man to put him in, he began to cry out. . . . The lieutenant came up, wiping his hands. His face was very red.

"All right, Mr. Howe. Go ahead with your firing. Leave number two off this string. Want to look it over. Got the butts, telephone? Report ready on the firing-line."

The lieutenant found a quivering recruit who said he didn't feel like firing any more that morning; and the lieutenant dressed him down in a voice like a whip, so that the feelings of all were relieved. Five minutes later, firing was proceeding steadily.

The range-officer went on to the hospital. "For he looks very bad to me, Will. I don't like it when they turn the color he did. I'll get over there. And I might as well get the Top started on his papers. We'll be transferrin' him to the hospital. He's through with us."

Private Kemper died at fifteen minutes past noon. They did not sing in camp that night, as was their custom—no "Prisoner's Song," no carol of the chap who lived down by the "Winegar Woiks"; Lulu had rest. The Marine officer sat in his tent, writing the last draft of his report. The pitiful small papers of Private Kemper were spread out before him.

"No next of kin—drifter, evidently—nobody to write to; I'm glad of that. Poor devil!" He picked up a paper. "Correspondin' with two matrimonial agencies, I see—Kupid's Konfidential Klub, an' so forth—describes him-

self as home-lovin', fond of pets, an' yearnin' for an affectionate pal. Well—he knows more about . . . things . . . now, than I do. . . . Five years in the service, and he walks in front of a machine gun. . . . Odd, that—we tried two hundred times to fire that gun that way—and it wouldn't fire. . . . Due to be struck off the rolls, I reckon," concluded the captain.

There was a discreet scratch on the tent-pole. He looked up to see Corporal Bogart standing before him. Corporal Bogart saluted. "Sir, Corporal Bogart has the first sergeant's permission to speak to the captain."

"Yes, Bogart. What is it?"

"Sir, about Private Kemper. Private Kemper was in my squad—our squad, sir, and the squad sort of feels—the squad would thank the captain if the captain would let the twelfth squad furnish the escort an' all—Private Kemper bein' in the twelfth squad."

"Surely, Bogart. No word yet about services. But the twelfth squad will have the detail, and I'm glad you feel that way."

"Thank the captain. The twelfth squad will turn out early, an' practise snappin' in on volleys."



Five minutes later, firing was proceeding steadily.

AMBUSH



IX

AMBUSH

DEEP in the Nicaraguan jungle between Rama on the Escondido River and La Cruz on the Rio Grande, two columns approached each other. It was about Christmas, toward the end of the rains, and the country was a morass like a nightmare. In normal times no man ventures overland in Nicaragua while the rainy season holds; life goes by the rivers. It is only eighty miles on the air-line from Rama northwest to La Cruz, but it is easier and quicker to travel sixty miles down the Escondido to Bluefields, take passage up the Mosquito Gulf to Rio Grande Bar—ninety miles or so—and then go a hundred and ten miles by river-craft again, than to attempt the cross-country trail.

General Don Elisio Montera, commanding the Federal Army of the Caribbean, now based on Rama, would have preferred the water-route, but the North American admiral had declared the seaports neutral and forbidden to war, and the admiral's cruisers and Marines lay off the river-mouths to keep them so. After that, the war turned inland, and Federal and Revolutionist fumbled for each other across lagoon and swamp, in a blind and

matted terrain that was the friend and foe of both. Don Elisio, ordered to crush the Revolutionary garrison at La Cruz, had no choice but to proceed by the trail that connects the two places. He set out with a column numbering 500 rifles, besides his Lewis guns, and, since he expected to establish himself permanently in La Cruz, the women were along.—Your Latin-American soldier does not go far without his women.—There were also some cattle, rations on the hoof, and there was a long line of oxen, loaded with ammunition and sacks of rice and beans. The unwieldy column, brave with the blue hatbands of the Federal forces and a large blue-and-white Nicaraguan flag, covered no more than ten miles a day. Before Don Elisio had finished three days' marching, in continued rain, the Revolutionary general in La Cruz had heard that he was coming. Such news travels fast and unaccountably in the back-countries. They have an Indian word for it that means about the same thing as “grape-vine telegraph”; it cannot be explained; the reasonable man will shrug his shoulders and take advantage of it. In another day Klaus Weber, sometime staff-officer of Von Mackensen on the Eastern Front, now commanding the La Cruz area for the Sarmiento faction, had exact and detailed information as to how La Cruz was going to be crushed. It did not fall in with his plans, and he was not pleased. He sat in his *comandancia* above the Rio Grande at La Cruz, and smoked infinite cigarettes, and considered the matter.



Your Latin-American soldier does not go far without his women.

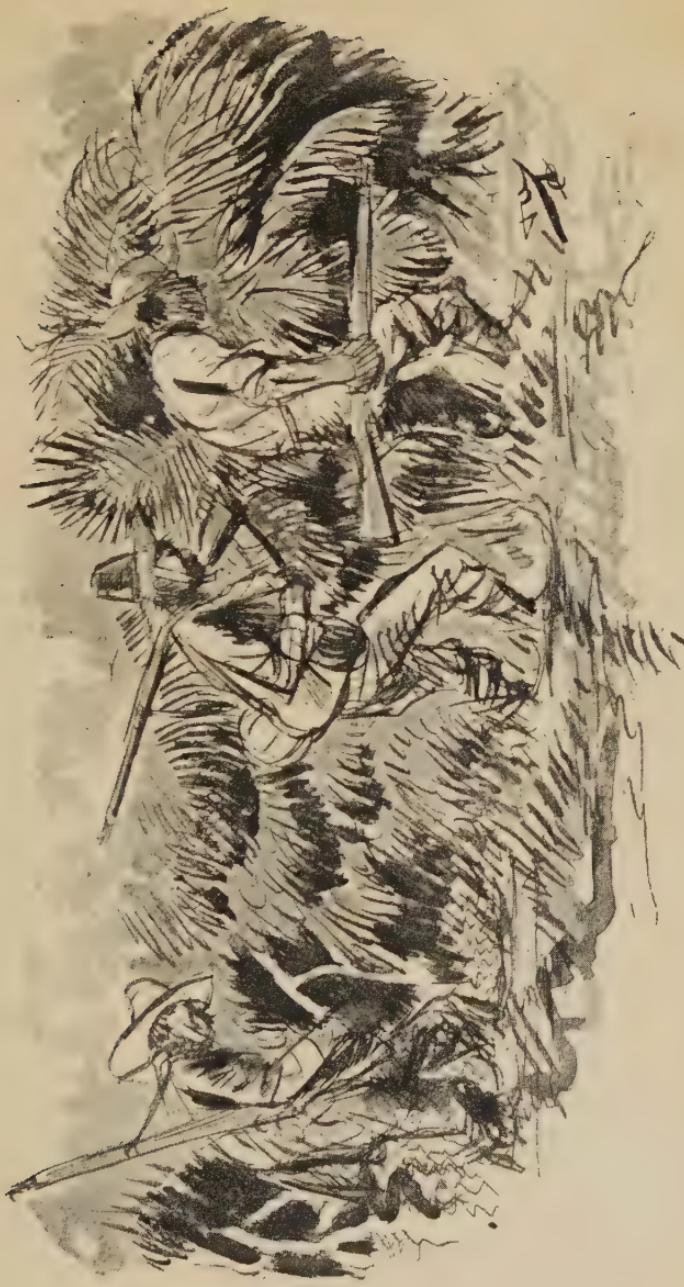


"Dear God, a country such as a sensible man does not imagine!" he reflected. "Some bright fellow should invent a machine for waging war in such a country . . . a thing like a U-boat, it would be, and like a tank, but mostly like a U-boat. . . . Why could not that little Don Elisio remain tranquil in Rama, where his men die peaceably of fever, until the rains finish and the country dries off a little? And I would have liked more drill for these monkeys of mine. . . . But Don Elisio must not get too close to us here, or my Indians will be alarmed. . . . Now: let us look at the map—let us consider the problem——"

The general closed his eyes and considered the map he carried in his head, which was the only map available, for somehow, nobody has yet gotten around to mapping Nicaragua for military purposes. "This Don Elisio, he is not, I think, a good soldier . . . he is a general because that old *Presidente* admired his mother . . . so they say. . . . Fighting in this country is exactly like two fellows meeting on a little path between two walls. . . . You must know when you are going to meet him . . . to deploy—to find a front to fire from— He is four days on the trail. I will let him come two more—it will be the longer walk back. . . . And there is a place I remember, beyond Cuncun creek—" he shut his eyes again, and looked at that place. "Yes—there—in the middle of the day—" He opened his eyes and nodded vigorously. Then he went out to observe the practice of

his machine-gunners. He had introduced an innovation among the Nicaraguan armies. That innovation was target-practice. Two days later he entered the jungle with a hundred riflemen and a Vickers machine gun. He was informed that Don Elisio was having difficulties on the trail, and that the Matagalpa Indians of his force, unaccustomed to these low lands between the rivers, were suffering with fever.

Between the rivers, the jungle rolls like a sea. It is a monotonous land of even contour. The fruit companies have cleared the river-banks for bananas, but outside these narrow cultivated strips you enter the freehold of the monkey and the parrot, the wild pig and the *tigre*, as it was before the *Conquistadores* came. Narrow trails, passable at best for men on horseback, twist through the jungle from river-settlement to river-settlement; they are used only in necessity, and by Indians. Where they are good, you sink to the calf of the leg. Where they are bad, and they are mostly bad, you go in to the waist. Careful people on these trails wear their pistols in shoulder-holsters. You do not leave the trail, however. To do so is to flounder through root-floored morasses, into tangles where you must cut your way with a machete to get forward at all, and lagoons of black water that have no bottom. Bamboo, low scrubby palms, trailing vines, and thorn-bushes choke the spaces between the great trees, and the great trees shut out the sun. Orchids depend surprisingly from high places, and bright curious



Where the trails are good, you sink to the calf of the leg.

blooms hang in clusters, and you may see a boa with a head like a wolf and the length of him as thick as a man's thigh, looped from an arching branch and watching you with cold lidless eyes. You hear the shrilling of the parrots and the conversation of the monkey people, thin noises in the upper air, for they live in the tree-tops against the sun. Below, you move always to the drone of myriad insects, in a green gloom, and a poisonous smell of decaying things. Nights, there will rise the sudden chorus of unnumbered frogs, swelling to a mighty orchestration. Then the frogs will fall quiet all at once, and the jungle holds its breath, and the yell of a hunting jaguar comes from infinite distance across the dark.

General Klaus Weber, travelling light, made sixteen miles the first day. His column was compact and business-like. His *mozos* with the red hatbands of the Revolution carried each a bit of jerked beef and a hatful of beans in their sacks, and you observed that their rifles were cleaned and polished. Tough chaps with machetes went ahead, clearing the trail where it was overgrown, and the heavy machine gun was passed from man to man as the day wore on. The general himself, hard and thick-set and burned to an even brown under his sun-helmet, went on foot before them, close behind his scouts. That night they slung their hammocks by the Cuncun creek, making very small fires, and they were afoot again in the rain before dawn. Late in the forenoon, an ex-

tremely muddy Indian materialized from under a bush by the trail. He had some loot; a Krag rifle, such as the Federals carried, and the rag of a blue hatband, and a pair of shoes slung around his neck. To him the general



That night they slung their hammocks by the Cuncun creek, making very small fires.

spoke apart, in the twittering dialect of the Karata Indians, while the column waited, sweating, but unconcerned. Then the general went forward, stepping delicately, his adjutants with him.

Years before, a tall ceiba-tree had fallen across the trail, which now turned at right angles to clear the mass of its roots. A fantastic broad-leaved vine with flowers like jets of blood had smothered it, and scrub-palms and creepers were grown up around it. Beyond it the trail



He had introduced an innovation among the Nicaraguan armies. That innovation was target-practice.

ran straight and fairly open for a hundred yards or so. To the left, the feathery tops of the swamp-palm, rising



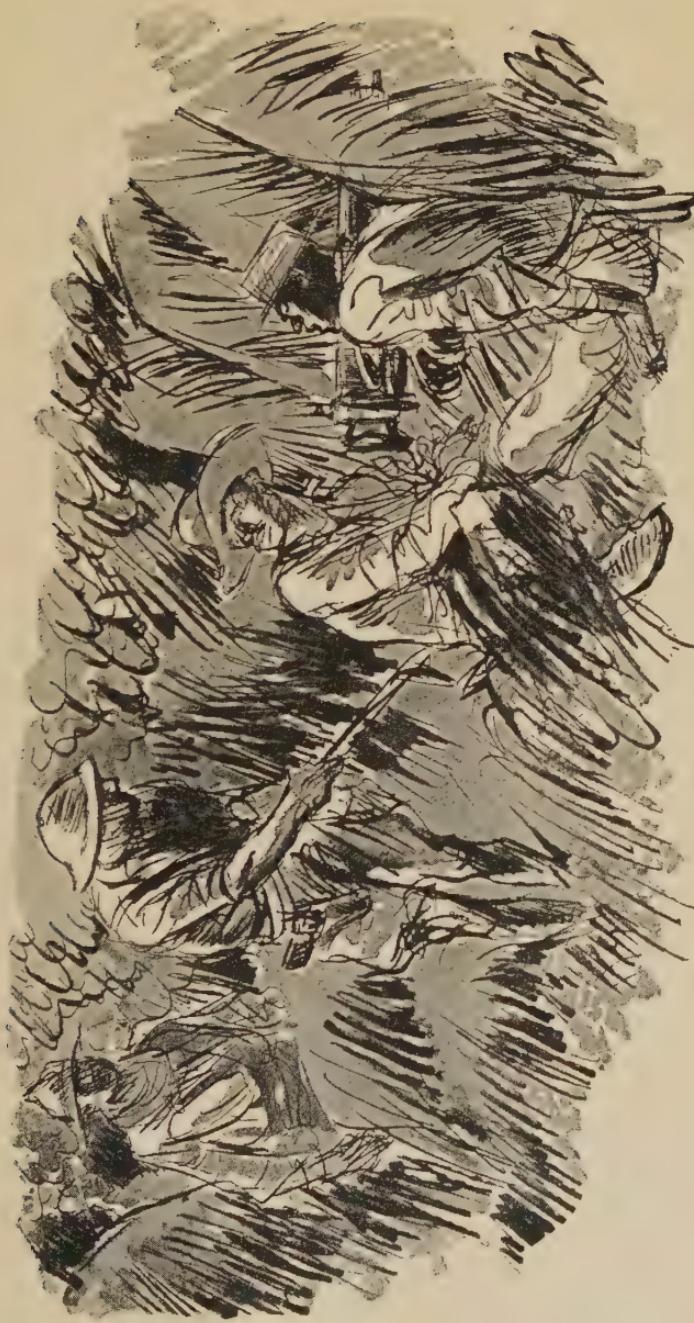
The main body with the women and the animals would be straggling behind.

out of the undergrowth, indicated standing water. On the other hand, vine and scrub and thorn were as solid

as an English hedge, and tall trees laced their branches overhead. The general halted here, taking care not to step around the fallen ceiba on the trail. He sent his adjutants sloshing back on the run, and presently the column came up.

Picked machete-men, long-armed fellows from the plantations below Guadeloupe, opened a way off the trail behind the ceiba, where the general indicated. They tracked straight in for fifteen or twenty yards, then turned and cut parallel to the trail at that distance. They worked fast, and the result was a sort of green tunnel flanking the straight reach that the general had selected. When it was done, the column slipped in behind them, unwrapping the rags that kept the mud from the bolts of their rifles, and hitching their cartridge sacks forward. Hill Indians, river Indians, and lanky negroes from the Mosquito coast and the *bananals* of the rivers, they had played this game before, and they were grinning.

The general watched them file by. "Quickly, now, *múchachios*—make yourselves ready—then let no man move! No *cigarillos*, either! If you itch there in the *bosque*, the girls in La Cruz will scratch you to-morrow night! No noise at all—these little *nacionales* are as sly as pigs—" There was a little thrashing and rustling while the riflemen settled themselves in the mud, across the roots of trees, anywhere a man might lie with his rifle pointed at the trail. Adjutants wormed along the line, making sure of their direction. The rifles would not see



The general saw that no leaf or branch was disturbed in front.

what they fired on, except in spots, but the machine gun would. . . .

The general himself laid the machine gun. He found a place by the ceiba-trunk, where the blunt ugly weapon



There was an obscure choking noise—no more.

could be snuggled in the bush, covering the straight reach of the trail, yet securely masked by drooping fronds. Sweating and grunting, the crew worked it into position. The general saw that no leaf or branch was disturbed in front. He himself tried the firing-mechanism, adjusted the sights, and clamped the elevating-gear rigid, with a limited arc for traversing. The crew placed themselves,

and lay like a coil of snakes. The general gave instructions:—"and fire when you hear my whistle, Juan," he concluded—"and remember: fire not continuously, but in short bursts, as I have schooled you—" One detail remained; the general posted a tall lean negro just around the turn of the trail, behind the ceiba. The black man was unarmed. For there would be a point, all alone, and a man hit with a machete might cry out. But if you squeeze his neck, he does not utter. . . . Then the general and an adjutant placed themselves near the gun, where they could watch the trail, and waited, motionless as alligators where the pigs come down to drink. It was near noon; the sun was out, and the jungle was a steaming silence.

A confused murmur came up the trail, growing louder. There was a muffled sound of many feet in the mud, and a jingle of equipment. One sang a Spanish song of love and absence, a thing of wailing cadences. The general, immobile, alert, listened . . . have they no scouts, the monkeys, that they go singing—if they march so, there will be no flankers either . . . not even those poor Russians would come on—this Don Elisio is worse than a Roumanian brigadier! Pfui. . . . So!

A soldier appeared at the turn of the trail. He plodded carelessly, for La Cruz was several days distant; advance-guard was better walking and not unpleasant, with the enemy so far away. Every one knew that those drunken rascals at La Cruz would not venture off the river—eh,



The Adjutant.

but they would shortly receive a pill. . . . Those red flowers yonder, the point considered, would look uncommonly well in Concha's hair. . . . Concha in Managua, beyond the lake. . . . He was a Spaniard of the West coast, and he took up his song again. . . . He passed around the ceiba, his eyes on the red flowers; Klaus Weber could have touched him through the brush. There was an obscure choking noise; no more. Two soldiers were in sight now, Indians with leaden faces. Behind them came the advance-guard, huddled here and strung out there as men picked the easiest walking. An officer rode a mule and smoked a cigar. His men, rifles slung, came on without concern.

The general waited until the reach of the trail was full of men—perhaps eighty; all the guard company. The main body, with the women and the animals, would be straggling a mile behind. The leading files were very near him when he blew his whistle. One he shot with his pistol; the machine gun cut the legs from under the other, while he stared with a frozen foolish face. Then that narrow way filled with sound. The staccato drumming of the Vickers gun, ordered and inexorable, beat against the jungle walls, magnified to thunder. The rifles down the flank, firing blind, added a note of shrill, angry hysteria, and the cries of men pierced through all of it. The hidden riflemen raised tigerish yells. The head of the column crumpled first into the mud; the machine gun, firing as low as the knee, cut men down, struck them as

they fell, flattened them into a screaming, writhing confusion. There was no way out; hardly a shot was fired



"Quickly, now, *muchachios*—make yourselves ready."

from the trail. Then the outcry and the plunging abated, and the machine gun stopped with terrible finality, for there was nothing more to fire at. You heard the hoarse shouts of the adjutants and the officers, silencing the

riflemen. Their fire died in a crackling string, and they burst into the trail with knives and machetes, to finish



The head of the column crumpled first into the mud.

any detail the machine gun might have left, to forage for shoes and shirts and trousers better than their own.

The general emerged from his cover and refreshed him-

self with a cigarette. He picked his way down the trail, counting absently—perhaps a few had escaped from the rear of the company: he hoped so. Survivors to spread the terror—highly desirable. He noted that the mule had been an excellent animal, and he regretted that it was also a casualty. As for Don Elisio and the main body, he knew that no power on earth could force those fellows forward, with that sound in their ears. It now remained judiciously to annoy him the rest of the day. He might pick up Don Elisio's cattle, and a few sacks of rice. Food, after all, was your hardest problem. He called his men off, leaving what he left to the black *zapolitos*, that were already wheeling down from the hot sky. He sent forward points, with connecting files, and threw out picked machete-men to work through the jungle on either flank. He considered it disgraceful to be surprised, and he regarded his own military reputation too highly to run any risk of ambush.

MAIL DAY



X MAIL DAY

ALL hands have been talking about it since the last mail-boat.—“Let’s see—to-day’s the twenty-fifth; that cock-eyed mail orderly says there’s a P. and N. boat on the fourth—just ten days, huh?”—“Just ten days, hell! How long d’yuh think ten days is, sailor?”—“Aw—what’s the sense in mail anyway, down here at the fartherest place there is! Tell you—that last mail we got, I get a letter from my girl—told me about goin’ out to Ocean View wit’ a damn gunner’s mate from the Naval Base—Hampton Roads—you know—on the Sunday after the Fourth o’ July. And here it is the end of August. Sometime next fall she gets my come-back, advisin’ her to lay off of gunner’s mates or say adoo to me. And by that time she prob’bly be cruisin’ steady with a corporal of Marines!” “Well, it’s ten days, like I said——”

The cruiser rocks to the long Pacific swell—the interminable roll that comes, day and night, wind and weather regardless, out of the blank southwest, from clear around the world. Down here in these naked Pacific roadsteads

you cast your anchor cunningly, and make the stern fast to a buoy, so that the bow will always ride up to the swell. Wind and tide are of no special consideration—but in an anchorage a few points off you will roll your innards out, as they say, very quickly. . . . Gulls—the ship's company has noted five species of gulls and will soon know the individuals by their Christian or given names; pelicans—all pelicans are amazingly dignified and answer to the name of “John”; and two kinds of cormorants—which are the esteemed guano-birds of this coast—rally around the ship continually. Pelicans and cormorants do not utter; gulls squall and mew forever, and are a weariness. . . .

Every morning, the deck divisions, scrubbing down with sand, holystoning, and waiting on the ship with the proper mysteries, see the sun come up out of South America, painting with rosy light, very briefly, the incredible bleak barrenness of the Rainless Coast. There is guard mount; the band plays; the bugles go for quarters. The cruiser hums about the routine of her day, a self-contained and aloof little world, suspended in a tremendous boredom. The sun mounts, veiled sometimes in pale clouds that threaten but never perform; and shoreward you observe a place of tumbled sand-hills, drab as an ash-heap, where no green blade or leaf grows, except a few sickly trees in the squalid town that crawls in the lee of a great scarred rock—El Morro. (There is something going on in that miserable town; high affairs of



The Rainless Coast.

state, concerning the details of which the ship has not the honor of knowing anything.) Far inshore, beyond the hills, beyond the ridges, you can see on a clear day enormous piled-up masses, like white clouds, except they hold their shape—the Andes. There is a bell on the fo'-c'sle that marks the passing of the hours. General drills. Brightwork. Chow. You reflect that, if you were in Scapa Flow or Singapore, Vladivostok or New York, Capetown or Punta Arenas, the general drills would go on, and there would be the same brightwork to be shined, and the bell forward would toll off the same hours in the fashion of the sea.

The sea is very old; things do not greatly change upon it. They relate that there was a ship on the navy-list once—U. S. S. *Wateree*. The dark spot on the beach yonder, three and a half miles up the coast, is her boilers. In 1869 she lay in here, perhaps where we lie now. American sailors and Marines aboard her went about their little details, as we do now. And there was an earthquake ashore, following which the water receded from the coast, and left every ship in the roadstead sitting on the ocean-floor. To be exact, reclining on their sides. Except U. S. S. *Wateree*, which was a paddle-wheeler of Civil War construction, and had a flat bottom: she settled upright. When the Pacific Ocean returned, as it did presently and with violence, U. S. S. *Wateree* floated like the Ark. All the others—there were a lot of them, lying like stranded mullet—were swept up, rolled over, and

savaged generally by merciless water—the hulk of one sailing-ship washed up with her own anchor-chain three times around her! But U. S. S. *Wateree* rested tranquilly some miles inland at the foot of the hills, where the tidal wave set her down. Subsequently thrifty Chileños used her for a hotel, road-house, hospital, God knows what. A later storm came in after her, made sport with her, and deposited her on the beach where her boilers now remain.

They say that tidal waves, which occur from time to time on this coast, are always preceded by an earthquake. Our captain is on record to the effect that, if a *temblor* starts, he will light off all boilers and go to sea. Or so he was reported by that truthful Marine, the captain's orderly.— “Old Man say that? Well, they do say these earthquakes and such are hard on pore folks ashore—but if it's got to happen, here's a fine place for one!”

So this day, and any other day. There is liberty from one o'clock to five for one hundred men; about twenty valiant souls go over, and the bored shore-patrol. . . . “Not that there's a dam' thing on the beach. The girls, now, they got ankles like beef cattle;—that *pisco* stuff they sell you, it'll grow hair right in the middle of a guy's stomach! Yeh! Two drinks, an' you'll come back and ask the Exec. for a match, right on the quarter-deck.—All same, a liberty's a liberty! Le's go—” When the launches return after five, the red flag—the chow flag—is at the foreyard-arm, and all the gulls are milling with

petulant remarks by the garbage-chute, port side; they know when we eat. The band and the Marines of the guard form across the quarter-deck: the band discourses the national air, and the flag comes down. Out on the Pacific the sun shows through the seaward haze, a tired sun in a smudge of yellow. Looking inland, the hills are lovely in lavender with purple shadows, and the high peaks of the Andes hang far above and beyond, insubstantial as dreams in a sky like mother-of-pearl. Then it is dark, and the Southern Cross, canted and lopsided, blazes out, and the bugles go for movies. Presently, taps. Nine days until the mail.

Even with nothing to mark it, time will get on somehow: it is Saturday; the ship and her people are groomed for captain's inspection. When your mess-boy comes in with early coffee, you say: "Morning, Alipougo. Say, did the mail-boat get in?" "Mail-boat, ess, ser, he come in. Anchor port side—you look—see?" The commander's morning orders say: "08:00—mail orderly to go aboard mail-boat and bring off mail. Mail will be distributed immediately following captain's inspection." "Well, mail's aboard," says the officer of the deck when you come up the hatch, pulling on your gloves, to your division parade. "Guard—tention! Guard present—counted for, sir!" reports the first sergeant of Marines to the Captain of Marines; and "Yes, sir. Nine bags first-class, the mail orderly says, sir," adds that invaluable non-commissioned officer in discreet tones. Sometimes

inspection can be longer than other times. And you know the Old Man wants, just as badly as anybody, to see what is on his desk in the cabin—sense of duty's a great thing !

Finally the gold and glitter passes the last compartment to be inspected—Gun 8, in the Marine compartment. The captain goes aft, and the bugles sing “Carry On”—and, “Mail-O!”— Better remind the gunnery-sergeant about those tompions— “Oh, Murphy—here a minute—” The shock-headed company clerk comes on the run from the detachment-office—mail is distributed by divisions. He climbs on a mess-bench, and a hundred Marines, from the guard in their white belts and tight blouses to the captain of the head in skivvies, mass around him. “Non-coms get theirs called off first— Je's, I'm goin' to strike for corporal, I am!” . . . I think that if the folks who write our letters could see those letters handed out, in far places, they would write more of them . . .

There is the detachment sheik; four times, to the envy of all, his name is called. He has a blue envelope from Norfolk, and a pink one from Beaufort, S. C., and a large, square billet from Brooklyn—very elegant stationery—and the biggest and fattest of all is plain white, from a place in Pennsylvania you never heard of. Sheiks, one may remark, make good soldiers. For one thing, they never risk stoppage of shore liberty by misconduct. They are ambitious fellows, loving the gauds and glamour of the higher ratings; they are well aware of the effect a ser-



That cock-eyed mail orderly.

geant's chevrons, cloth of gold against blue cloth, make on a simple maid.

There is also the intense chap who gets a lot of letters, almost as many as the sheik. They are from the same place and in the same handwriting. He goes off by himself to read his mail and answer it. You happen to know that he allots most of his pay to a certain savings-bank, which pays four per cent. You consider that you will probably lose a good Marine in that bird, when we get North; he's due to be paid off. Chances are, you'll have a vacancy for a corporal, and there will be a new service station or some such thing on a North Carolina highway, with the girl who writes those letters on the premises. . . . Gun-striker on Gun 8 has done very well. Has a stack of it. He's retired under his gun, and set his letters in a neat pile. Shuffles them out according to dates—picks out the oldest one—postmarked six weeks since.—“Le's see—where was we that day?—standin' out of Balboa——”

There are the fellows who draw one letter—never any more; go off to read it slowly. Some of those letters will be brought to you to-morrow: things not so good at home, son; your father's rheumatism—can't work; could you increase your allotment, and ask your captain if you can't get out of the navy and come home, for we need you very badly—that sort of thing.

And there are the home papers—little four-sheet weeklies and semiweeklies, *Sentinels*, and *Eagles*, and *Patriots*,

and *Post-Items*. They are read before any one bothers to open the great dailies, New York and Philly and Chicago, that lie now unnoted on the sergeant's table. Presently men will shuck off their wrappers and seek out the bathing-girls in the picture supplements. . . . Crowd's thinning out—one bird receives, with indignation, the pious publication of a certain sect. "Aw!—I'll be—" But before the next mail comes, he will read it, out of pure boredom—even the testimonials. And there are always men who get no mail. They wait until the last. "That's all there is; there isn't any more," says the company clerk, tearing into his own. And they lounge off, making scornful remarks—forward, by themselves . . . nobody to join in a little seven-up. Or black-jack.

Then one goes to look at his own. It's the same aft as forward, on mail day . . . the orderly has left it on the desk. Not as much as you'd hoped—there never is—but more than last time, anyway! Saturday morning—inspection over—lots of time—eight—nine—ten letters—an even ten. Not counting two long official envelopes addressed to your job. Sorting them out luxuriously, you find seven directed in that rapid, angular handwriting, honest and distinguished, and not always immediately understandable—like the lady who writes—very like. How her pen, you remember, flies across the paper. Impetuous. And, unless the nib is perfectly new, scratchy. You remember once, with a genuine stab of remorse, inviting her attention to the scratching—prefaced, maybe,



Gun-striker on Gun 8 has done very well.

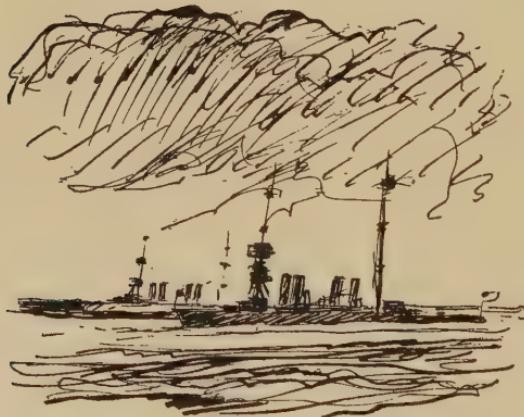
by . . . You would give much to recall that word. . . . It was a long time ago. . . . It is also a long time since that raw forenoon in late winter, a nasty gray day, with a wet sea-wind flailing East River, when you said appropriate things and came up the gang-plank. She—game and all that. So was Jack, valiant in his five years, and not unaccustomed to partings, and not quite sure what it was all about. . . . No tears, but her mouth was soft and quivery when you kissed it, and unshed tears are bright in the eyes and fall like slow rain upon the heart—Man's a fool to go to sea! And he always goes. . . .

“Rot—mustn’t get sentimental—” And then, you might as well—the cabin-door is shut, and you’re five thousand miles from anywhere and most of a year removed, down on the Rainless Coast. . . . A ship is a man’s world, quite. No place for women in it, whether in the wardroom country among the spurious and exact comforts of bachelors; or along the clangling living spaces forward, with the black little billet-hooks where the hammocks hang, and the unabashed guard, coming off, changes into something loose. Nor in the cabins, all painted and varnished and set with brightwork on which the mess-boy spends his soul, and where the faces of sweethearts and wives and children look inharmonious and a little strange.

Mail day, though, brings a gentle influence to the hardest ship, no matter where the striped sacks catch

up with her. There are, somewhere around the world, for most of us, women. And on this day, in a remoteness with a name out of the geography, they come aboard with the letters, mothers and sweethearts and wives, and are with us for a little. . . .

And after, you can look forward to the next mail.



OUR TEN DAYS

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